ピアノの森 13

一色まこと

モーニングKC 1554

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講談社

9784063725544

雑誌 42666-54

ISBN4-06-372554-5

C9979 ¥514E (0)

モーニングKC 講談社

定価：本体514円(税別)

1929979005146

The Perfect World of KAI

cover design KAZU GRAPHICS

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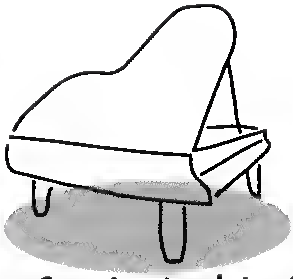
ISSHIKI Makoto
The Perfect World of KAI
13



The Perfect World of KAI

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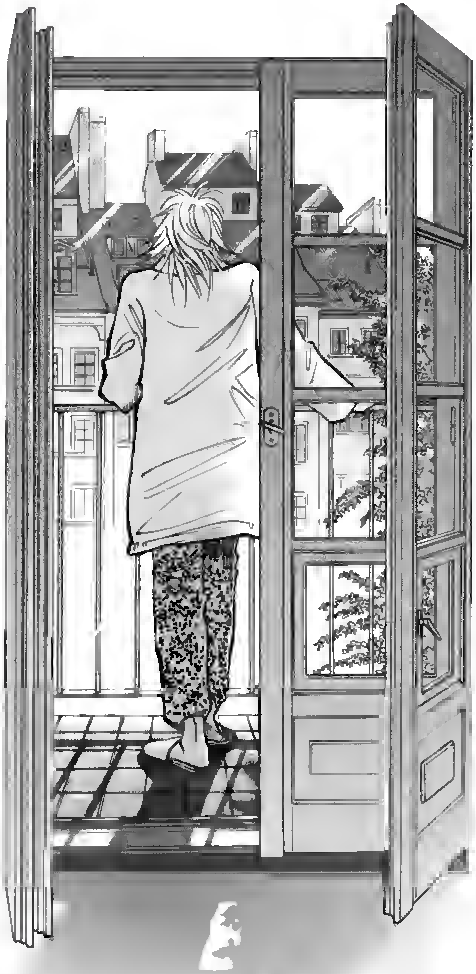
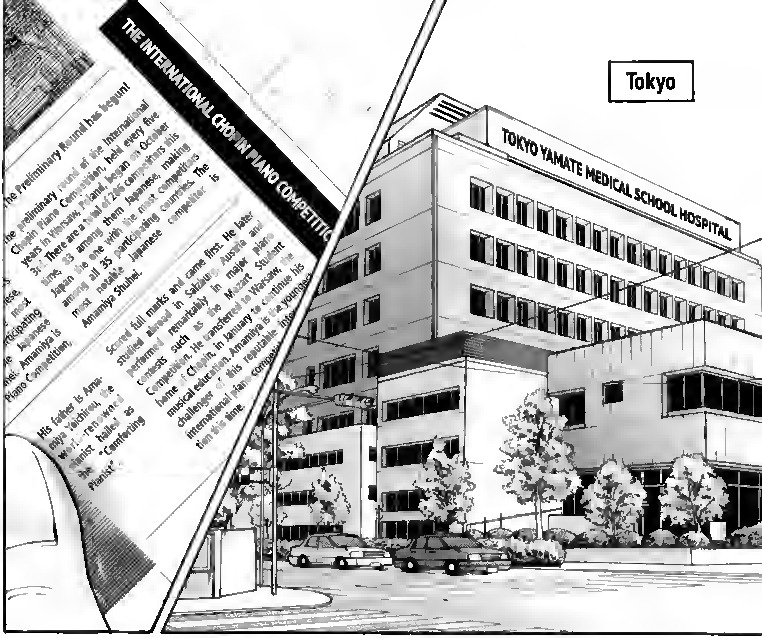


Chapter 107

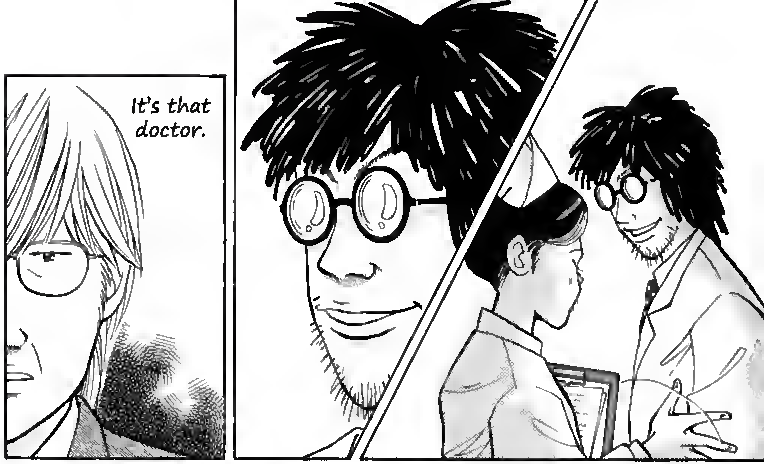
Suspicion 1

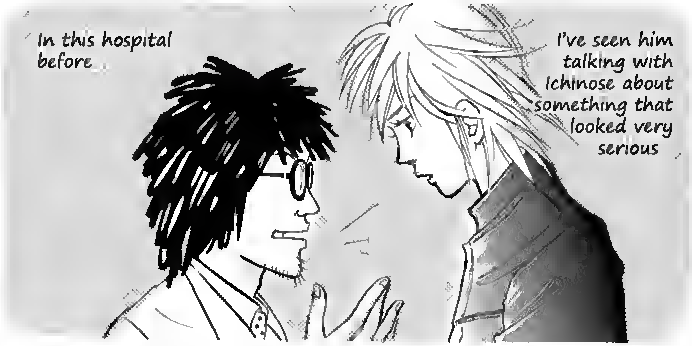

Tokyo
TOKYO YAMATE MEDICAL SCHOOL HOSPITAL
THE INTERNATIONAL CHOPIN PIANO COMPETITION
he Preliminary Round has begun!
the preliminary round of the International Chopin Piano Competition, held every five years in Warsaw, Poland, began on October 3rd. There are a total of 226 competitors this time, 13 among them Japanese, making Japan the one with the most competitors among all 35 participating countries. The most notable Japanese competitor is Amamiya Shunei.
Scored full marks and came first. He later studied abroad in Salzburg, Austria and performed remarkably in major piano contests such as the Mozart Competition. He transferred to Warsaw, the home of Chopin, to continue his musical education. Amamiya is a young challenger of this reputable international piano competition for the first time.
His father is Amamiya Yoshinori, a well-known world-class violinist, today's "Comforting the Pianist"

What did the doctor say?
How... How is it?

Sensei...

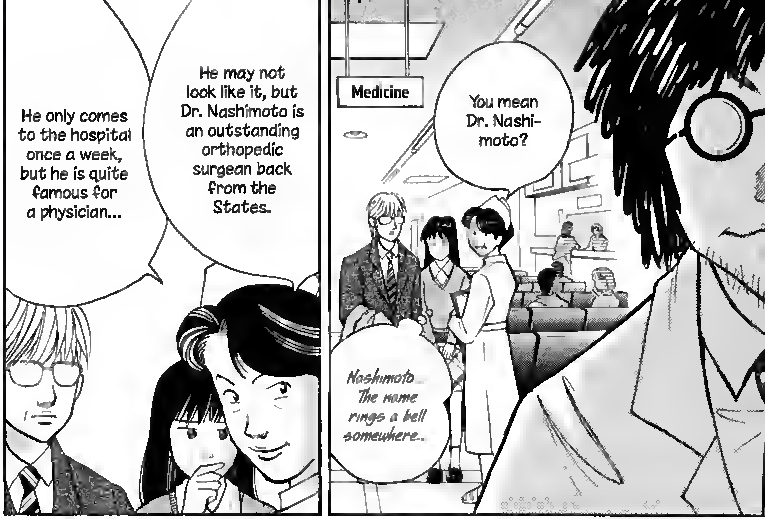
Really? That's great!
I don't need another referral, but I have to come back for regular check-ups in case it relapses...
Yay ♡
He said I've recovered completely.
The biggest relief is that I won't have to stop playing the piano!
I thought it would take much longer... A year went by in the blink of an eye!
Oh!
This really is good news!
That's because Takako tried very hard.

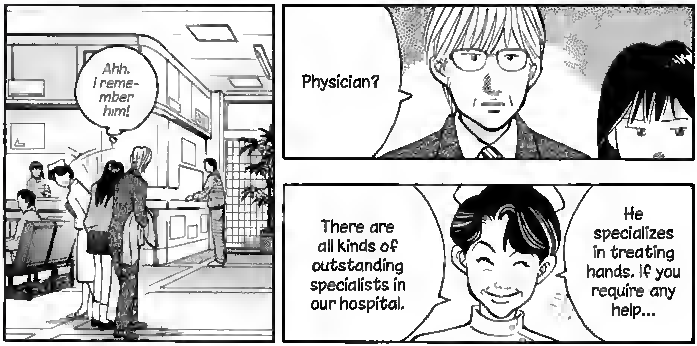

It's that doctor.

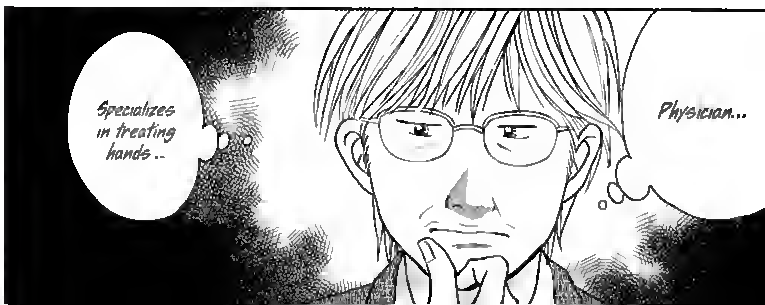

In this hospital before
I've seen him talking with Ichinose about something that looked very serious

Not once, but twice
. . .

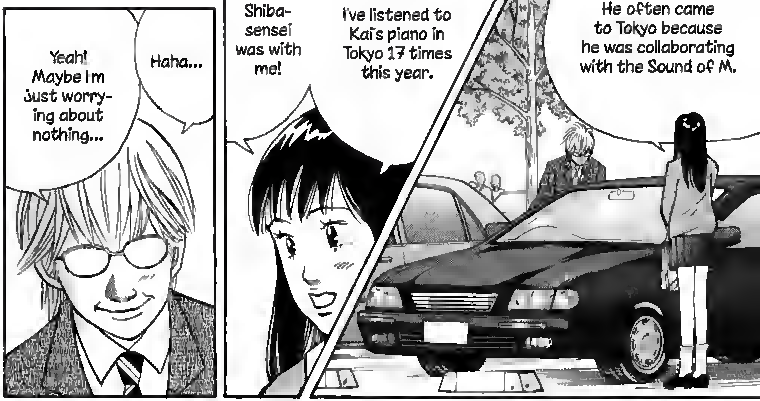
Excuse me...
Yes! I'm all fixed up now, thanks to all of you.
Is Takako-san's referral today already over?
Good afternoon!
Oh. Good afternoon, Shibo-sensei.
Ah...
Excuse me, but... was the doctor you were just speaking with a staff of this hospital?
No, you are too kind.
Thank you very much for your care.

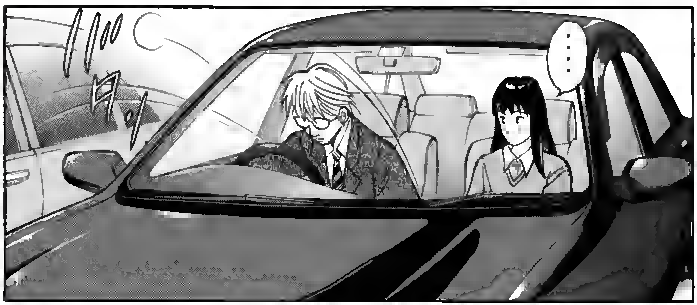

He may not look like it, but Dr. Nashimoto is an outstanding orthopedic surgeon back from the States.
He only comes to the hospital once a week, but he is quite famous for a physician...
Medicine
You mean Dr. Nashimoto?
Nashimoto... The name rings a bell somewhere..


Ahh. I remember him!
Physician?
There are all kinds of outstanding specialists in our hospital.
He specializes in treating hands. If you require any help...


Specializes in treating hands..
Physician...

That doctor was with him then.
Remember I told you I saw Kai here twice?
Is there something wrong with that Dr. Nashimoto?
What is it, sensei?
It probably didn't have anything to do with his hand. Maybe he just had a friend working here and he merely came for a visit...
I could just ask Kai about that through email.
And he's a specialist in treating hands...
He hardly needs to come all the way to a hospital in Tokyo to see his friend... It would have been understandable if it had happened just once...
附属病
Dr. Nashimoto must be his friend.
It's probably like what I said, Shiba-sensei!


Yeah! Maybe I'm just worrying about nothing...
Haha...
Shiba-sensei was with me!
I've listened to Kai's piano in Tokyo 17 times this year.
He often came to Tokyo because he was collaborating with the Sound of M.

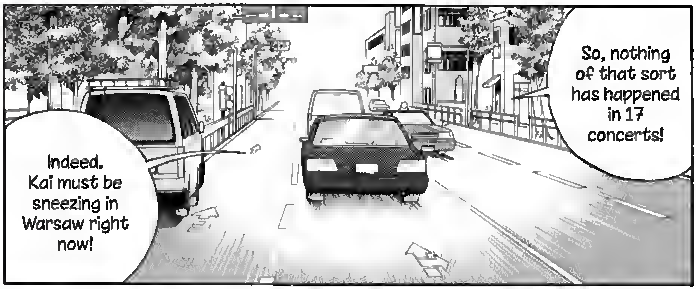

...

Sfx Thud

Oh!
But it's up to him to confess.
Kai could be hiding something.
My tendonitis from him before
Sensei must be worried because I hid.

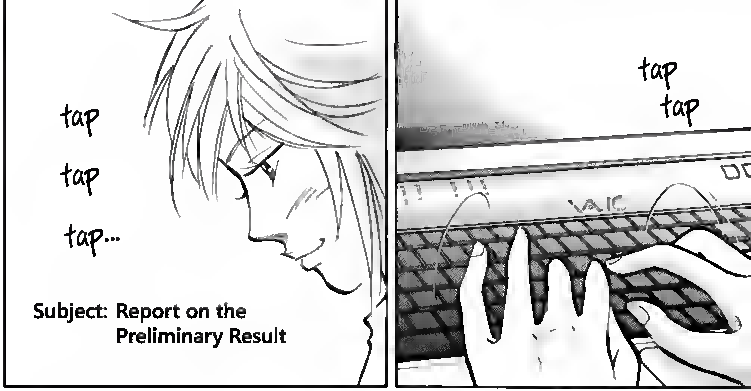
That's right. Because sensei said he was not interested in the Sound of M without Kai!
Hmm... I didn't go to that one.
Come to think of it, didn't the Sound of M have a concert at Hayama Music University?
So I asked the concertmaster...
I was lucky to become a staff that time and I could approach the people in the Sound of M!
And what did he say?
I asked him if there was anything wrong with Kai's hands.
Eh?

Haha...
I see.
Was his answer!
"Did the performance you just listened to sound like that?"

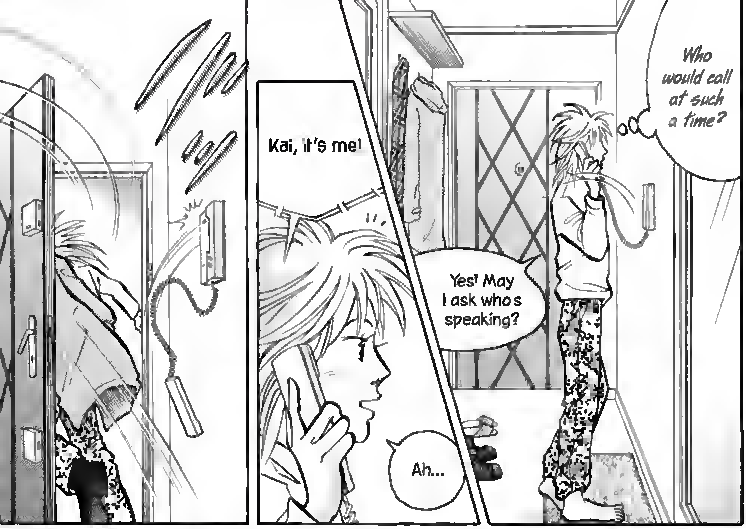

So, nothing of that sort has happened in 17 concerts!
Indeed. Kai must be sneezing in Warsaw right now!

Warsaw

tap
tap.. tap..
tap.. tap..



Sae-chan,
Though results are
always cruel and heartless, and can be dis
Thanks to Kousei's prayers for me...
and Amamiya's harsh encouragement...
I did it! I passed!!



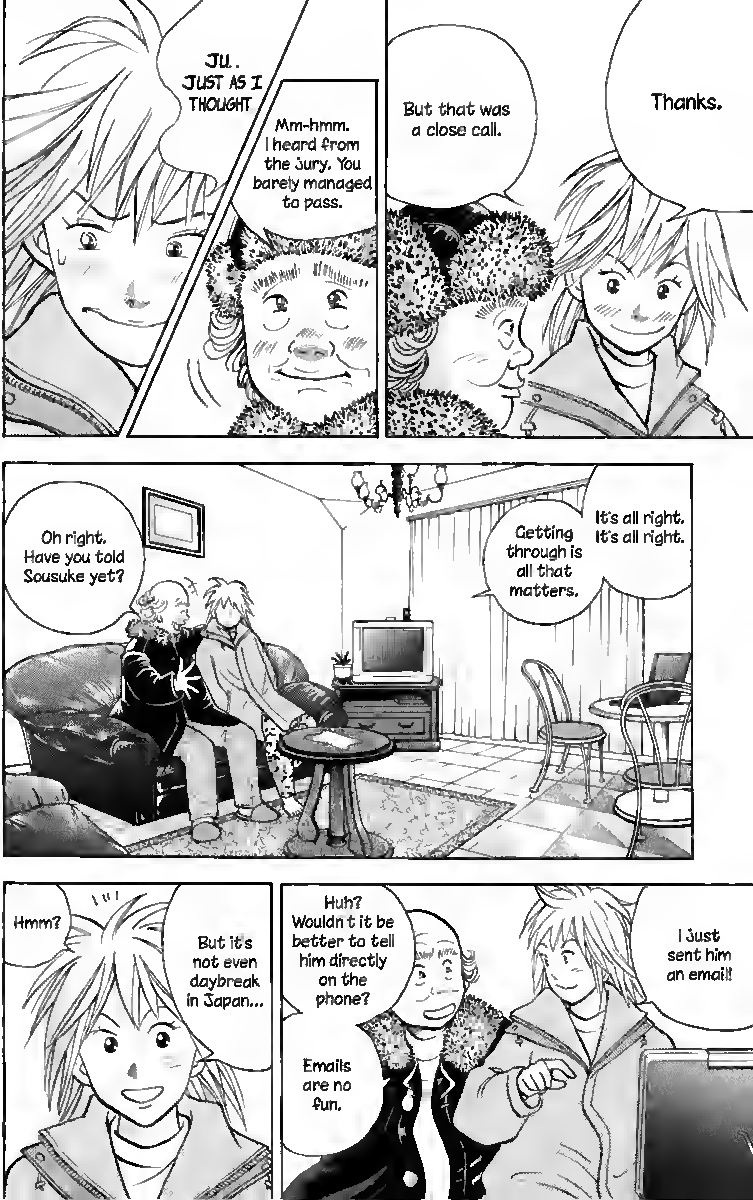
Sfx: Clatter

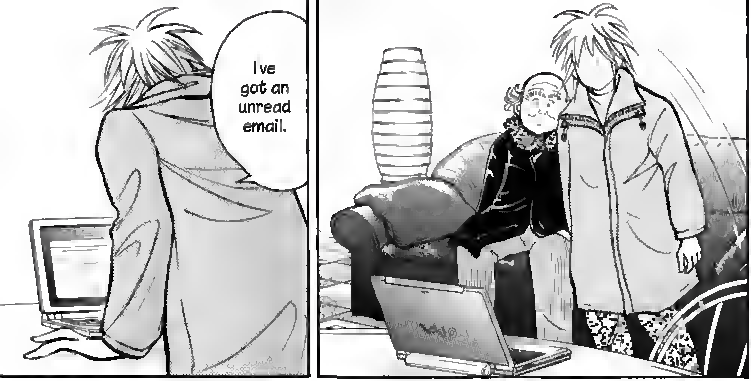
Sfx: Dash

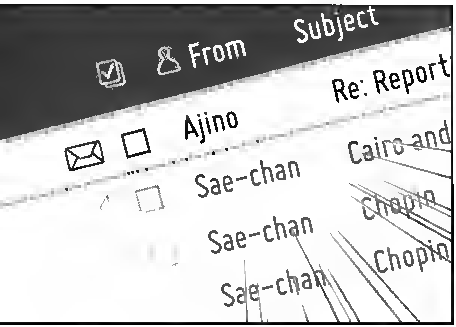
Sfx Dash

Grandpa Jean!!

When did you arrive in Warsaw?
I know it's very late, but I want to see you so much that I can't wait till tomorrow.
I'm here, Kai...
I'm so happy you've come to see me, Grandpa Jean!
It's okay. I wanted to see you too!
But I got held up by some friends. That's why I'm so late...
I originally planned to come at once after checking out the results...
Tonight!
I heard the results for the preliminary competition of the Chopin Academy were out so I came to have a look...
Congra-tulations on getting through the preliminary round!
Kai!

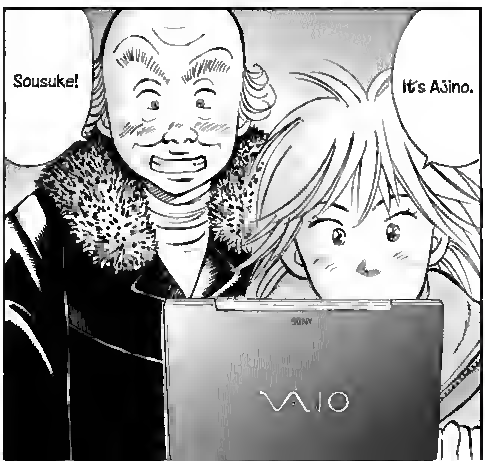

Ju. JUST AS I THOUGHT
Mm-hmm. I heard from the Jury. You barely managed to pass.
But that was a close call.
Thanks.
Oh right. Have you told Sousuke yet?
Getting through is all that matters.
It's all right. It's all right.
Hmm?
Ju!
But it's not even daybreak in Japan...
Huh? Wouldn't it be better to tell him directly on the phone?
Emails are no fun.
I just sent him an email!

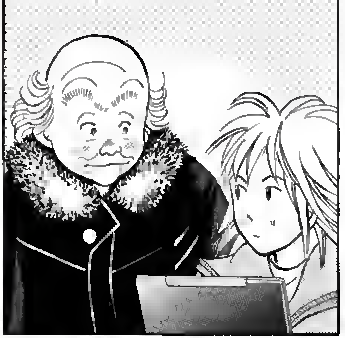

I've got an unread email.


From
Subject
Ajino
Re: Report
Sae-chan
Cairo and
Sae-chan
Chopin
Sae-chan
Chopin

From who?

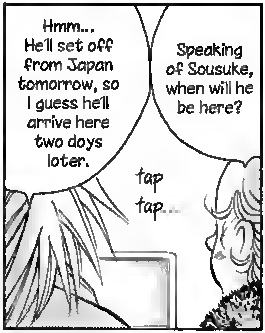
Ajino
click

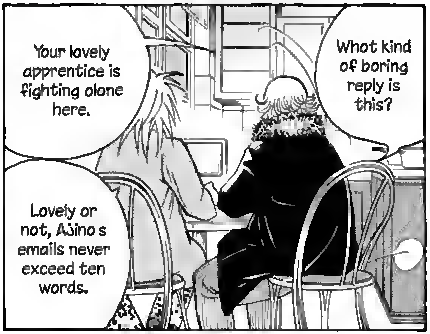

Sousuke!
It's Ajino.



From: Ajino
Subject: Re: Report on the Preliminary Result

Okay.

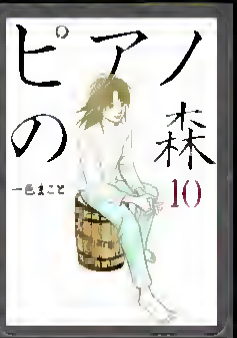

Hmm... He'll set off from Japan tomorrow, so I guess he'll arrive here two days later.
Speaking of Sousuke, when will he be here?
tap tap...


Your lovely apprentice is fighting alone here.
What kind of boring reply is this?
Lovely or not, Ajino's emails never exceed ten words.

And I'll just have to work hard on my own afterwards!
Don't worry! I'll concentrate on the competition until it is over...
Sousuke still doesn't know about that?
疑心① END

PIANO NO MORI

by Isshiki Makoto



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Chapter
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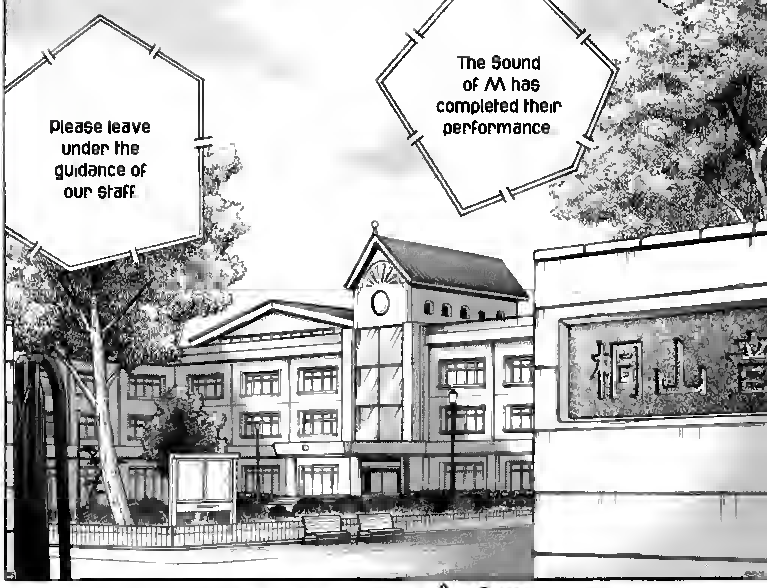
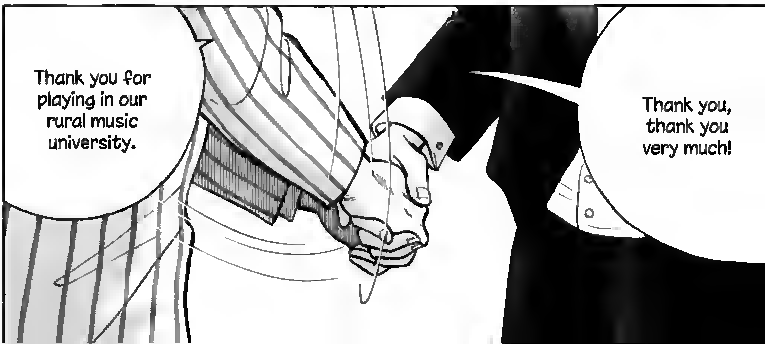
Suspicion
2

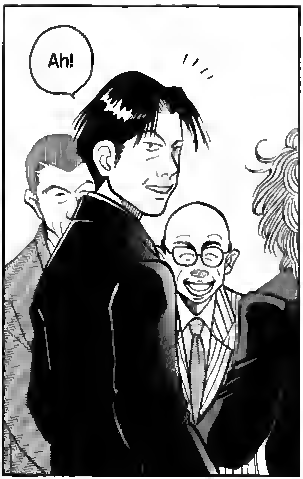

Please leave under the guidance of our staff.
The Sound of M has completed their performance.

The sound of M is fantastic.
I want to join them.
It was amazing.
A live concert is an awesome experience.


Thank you for playing in our rural music university.
Thank you, thank you very much!

I was surprised by your quick response.
I organized your concert when I learned that your revered orchestra was touring music universities.
It's my honor.

Aijino-sensei!
Long time no see!

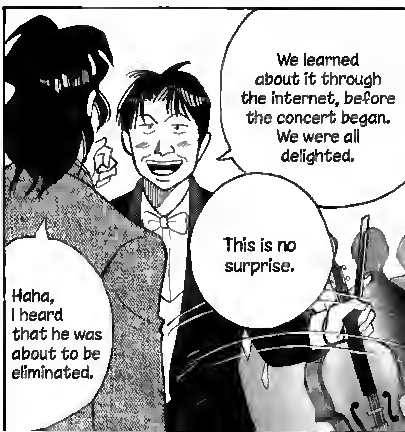

Ah!

You flatter me. It's my fortune to watch your immaculate performance.
When they planned this concert, I dreamt that I could meet Ajino-sensei here. God granted my wish.

Thank you.

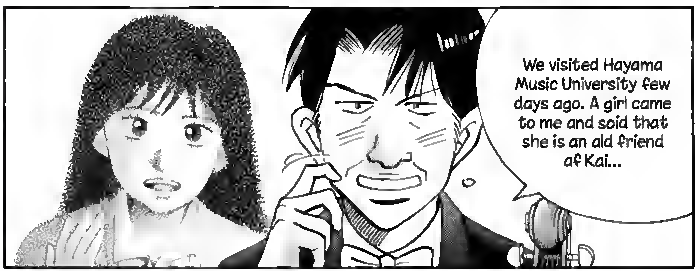
I've heard that Kai has passed the preliminary. Almost forgot to congratulate you.
Oh, by the way!

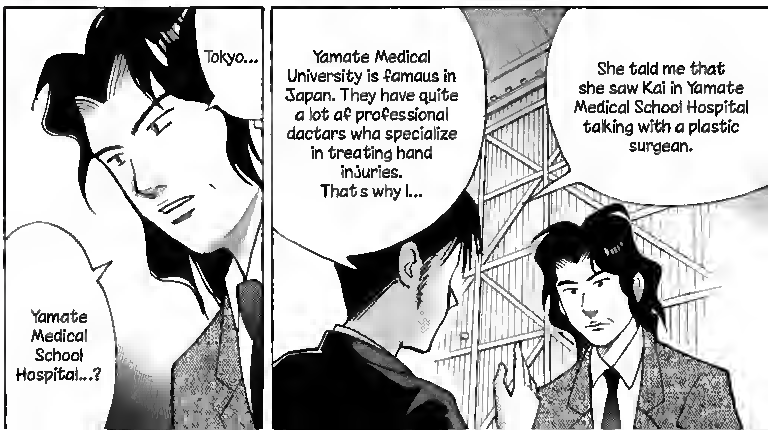
Ajino-sensei!
Ah!


We learned about it through the internet, before the concert began. We were all delighted.
This is no surprise.
Haha, I heard that he was about to be eliminated.

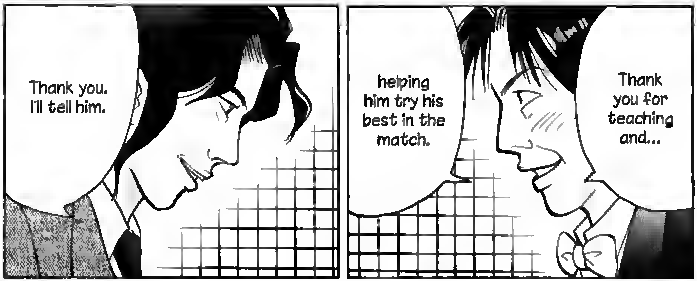
Thank you very much.
Thank you...
CONGRATULATIONS TO AJINO-SENSEI'S BELOVED DISCIPLE!
Kai's performance will be on the last day. I'd make it.
Tomorrow, from Narita Airport.
When will sensei go to Warsaw?
I have a question...
Well...
Ah...

No, nothing is wrong at all. We didn't find anything amiss.
Yes, I think so... Is something wrong?
Kai's hands are fine, right?


We visited Hayama Music University few days ago. A girl came to me and said that she is an old friend of Kai...


Tokyo...
Yamate Medical School Hospital...?
Yamate Medical University is famous in Japan. They have quite a lot of professional doctors who specialize in treating hand injuries. That's why I...
She told me that she saw Kai in Yamate Medical School Hospital talking with a plastic surgeon.

I'm sorry that's just my guess.
If he didn't mention that himself, he should be just fine.
Don't worry about it.


Thank you. I'll tell him.
helping him try his best in the match.
Thank you for teaching and...

Plastic surgery... specialists in hand injuries...?
...

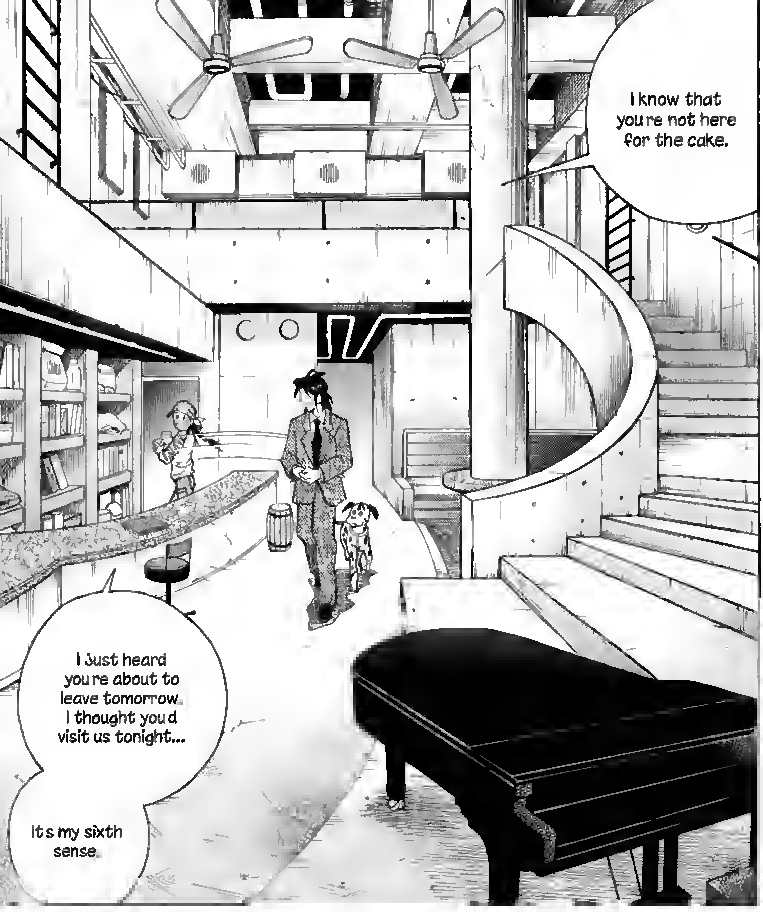
Party Club
CLOSE

...Ok.
I'm just wondering whether you'd get a cold...)
To be honest, I'm not worried about anything
(You're alone now, in Warsaw...

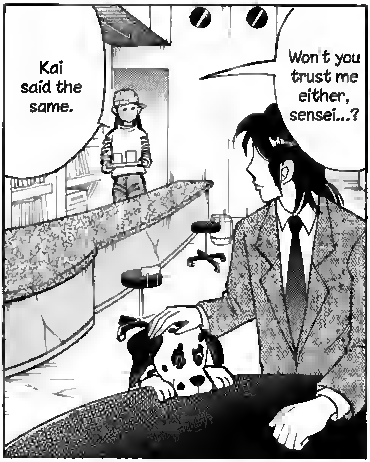
[If...
Ajino-sensei comes today...]
That's him!
Come in please, sensei!

Good evening.
Sorry to disturb you.
Actually, I knew you'd come.
I have a dog's nose.
Not at all~
Welcome!

Did you know that I was coming here with cake?
Ahhh~! Cake~ wanna eat, Tenmaru?!
Thank you sensei!
I'll make tea!

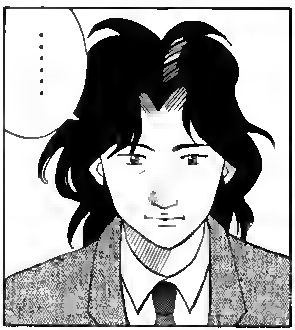

I know that you're not here for the cake.
I just heard you're about to leave tomorrow. I thought you'd visit us tonight...
It's my sixth sense.

When is your flight?
I can drive you to the airport!


Kai said the same.
Won't you trust me either, sensei...?

Thank you.
I'd rather use the metra- it's safer.

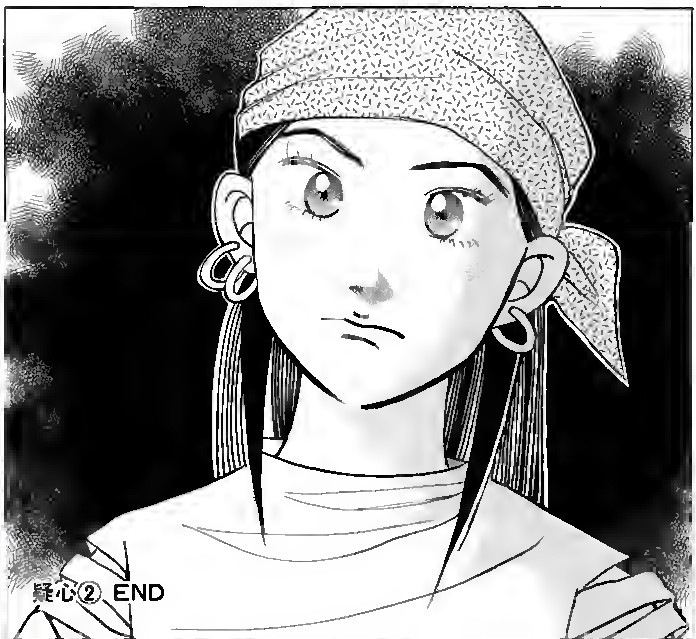
I deeply appreciate your enthusiasm.
Haha, Im sorry.


.....

You got something to send to Kai?
By the way,

And...
This is medicine for a bad cold...
Kai told me that it's cold in Warsaw so these can be useful.
These are hand warmers.
...
Great! I'll pack them into small packages.
Sae-chan.
No,
I don't mind.
I didn't intend to trouble you...
Oh, I'm sorry!
Hum?

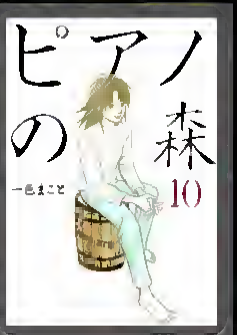
There's something...
I want to ask you, Sae-chan.
?
Has Kai ever had an injury to his hand?



疑心② END

PIANO NO MORI

by Isshiki Makoto



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Chapter
109
Sus-
picion
3

Someone told me that they saw Kai twice at one of Tokyo's pre-eminent hospitals.
Yes.
Kai's... Hands...?

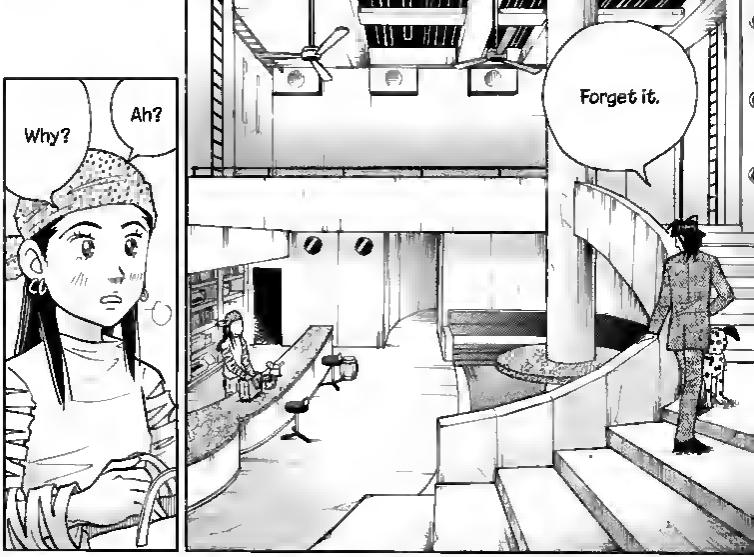
Upon hearing this, I'm starting to worry whether something's wrong with Kai's hands.

I was told nothing.
No.
Sae-chan, did he mention anything to you?
Sensei should be the first one to find out, am I right?
However, if Kai's hands really did have problems...
Since sensei didn't find anything wrong, this means Kai's hands are perfectly fine.
Heheh...
I didn't notice anything strange.
Yeah...

True that.
If Kai's hands did have problems, how is it possible for him to pass the prelimi-nary?
Like I said.
My heart can finally be at ease...
Naw that I hear this from you,
But to convince myself that everything is fine, can I have a look at Kai's room?

If it weren't for the piano, this place could be easily mistaken for a rubbish dump.
Speaking about mess, I recall how terrible this place was in the past.
It's rather messy though.
Go ahead.
I heard this place, in the past, was terrible beyond words.
Yeah.
At that time, I wondered how you managed to live here.

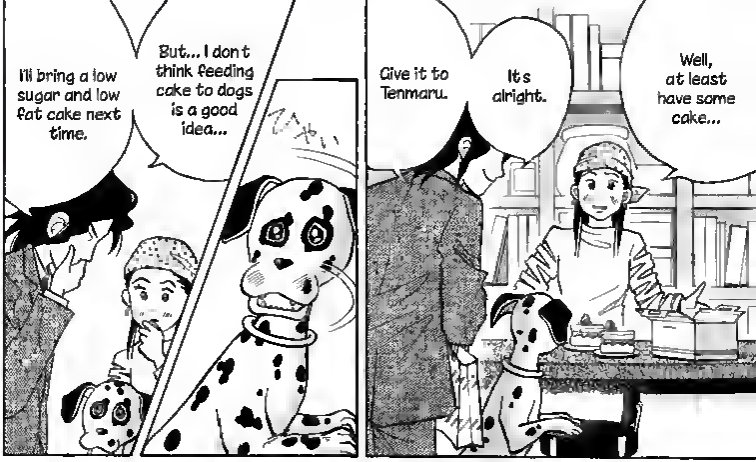
MODERN MEDICAL SCIENCE
LATEST MEDICAL SCIENCE
DIALOGUES WITH THE HAND
HANDS OF THE PIANIST
LATEST MEDICAL SCIENCE AND THERAPIES
EXERCISING NERVES AND
SYMPTOMS

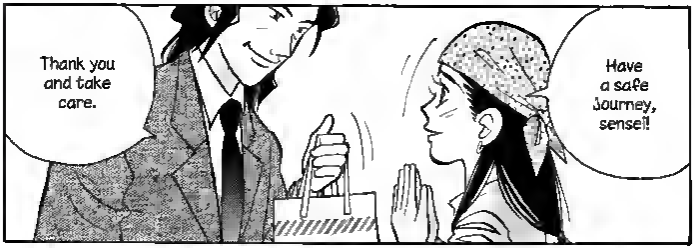

Ah?
Why?
Forget it.

Almost anything can be seen in Kai's room.

So that I can take exercise precaution.
If you find anything strange about Kai, please inform me immediately.
Haha...
Besides, Kai's naturally an expert in accumulating things.

You're leaving so early?
Eh?
I'll make sure to hand these things to Kai.
I shall take my leave then.
No problem.
Yes.
My car is waiting for me outside.
Party Club

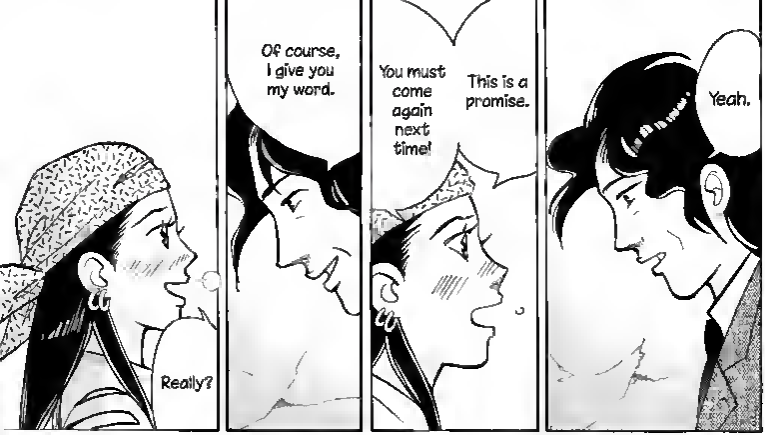

Well, at least have some cake...
It's alright.
Give it to Tenmaru.
But... I don't think feeding cake to dogs is a good idea...
I'll bring a low sugar and low fat cake next time.


Have a safe journey, sensei!
Thank you and take care.

Se... Sensei!
Ah!

You finally decided to speak the truth?
Hmm ?
Please wait a moment!
バタバタ
I won't tell Kai a word.
Just tell me.
It's bad for your health if you keep it bottled up.
But he will never betray you!
Maybe... Perhaps Kai is really hiding something from you...
It's... it's nothing...

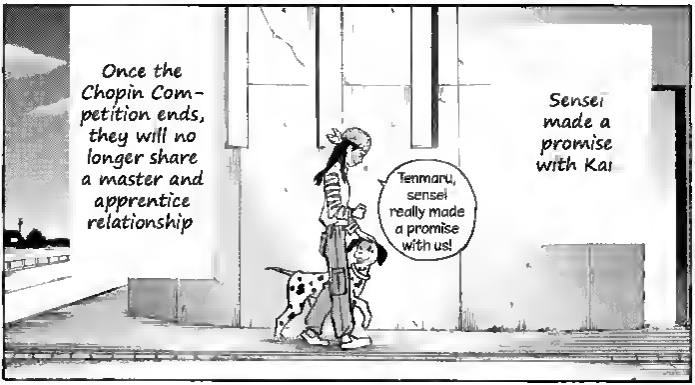
I CAN VOUCH FOR HIM!
Alright.
I apologize, I'm just joking.
I shall leave now.
Ah-
Please wait a moment!
In our previous conversation, you mentioned next time, didn't you?
?
You'll bring a low sugar and low fat cake next time!


Really?
Of course, I give you my word.
You must come again next time!
This is a promise.
Yeah.

It's a deal!

ブロロロロ
Ah, I would like to drop by another place.
Yes.
She's not only cute, but also a strong-willed girl.
That girl is very cute.
Even now, she's waving her hands.

That I will not have the chance to meet Ajino sensei again in the future.
I can't avoid this feeling


Once the Chopin Competition ends, they will no longer share a master and apprentice relationship
Tenmaru, sensei really made a promise with us!
Sensei made a promise with Kai

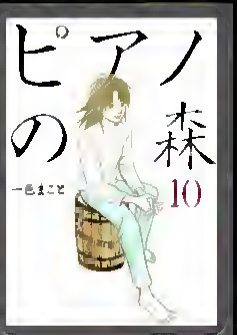
Now, the formal schedule of the Chopin Competition will kick-off

キャハハハ

Suspicion 3./ END

PIANO NO MORI

by Isshiki Makoto



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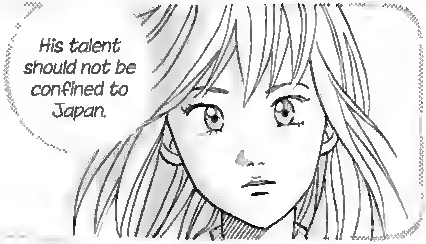
Chapter 110
Standing at the Edge of the Forest

あはは…
キャバクラ

I'll be heading to Warsaw tomorrow.
Ichinose-san

It's finally...
The promise we made few years ago...


His talent should not be confined to Japan.

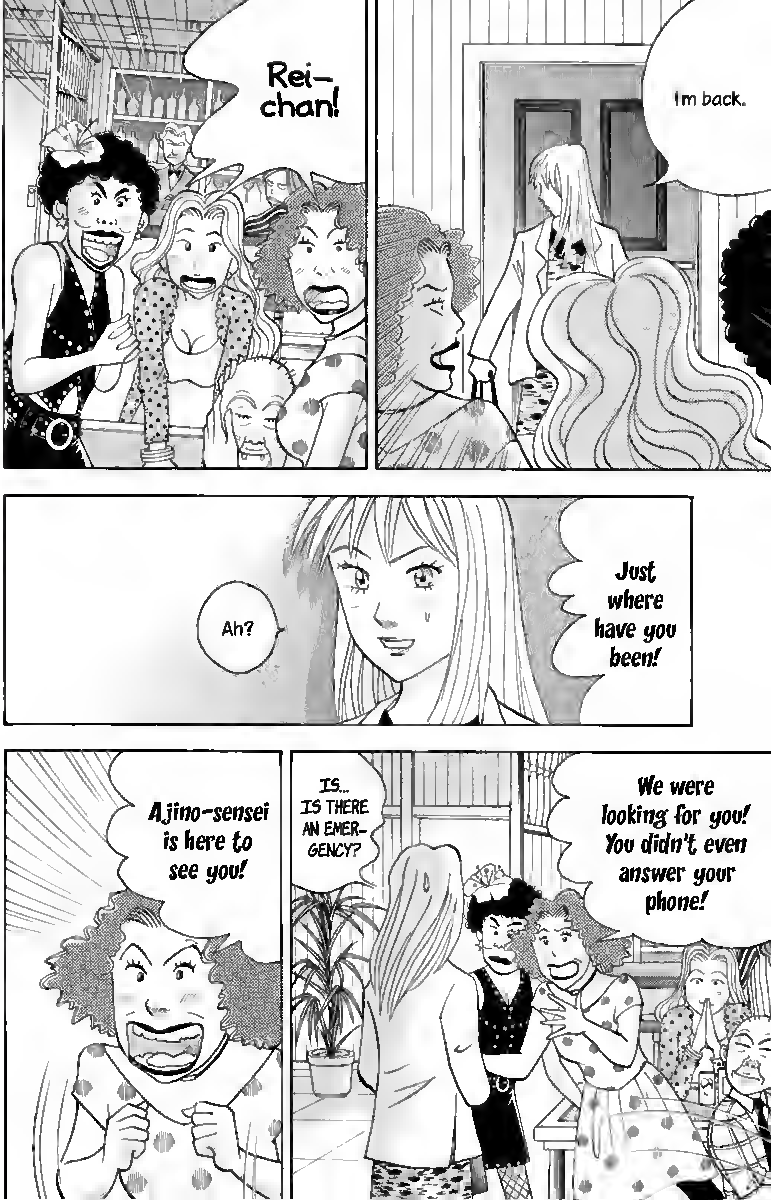
Please leave your son to me.
Going to be fulfilled.

I wish to lead him to the world's stage.

Lalala

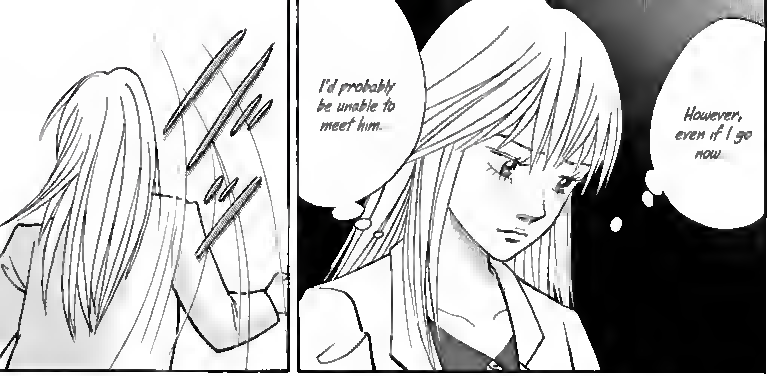
You... Aren't you...
Aren't you Kai's teacher?
The one who teaches Kai piano... Eh... Eh... Ajio-sensei!
My last name is Ajino.
Ahaha! Correct, correct, it's Ajino!
I find your name remarkable as it is very unique.
Sensei, what made you come all the way here? Ah! I know!
You must be looking for Rei-chan, am I right?
That woman seems to be up to no good. This is going to be trouble-some.

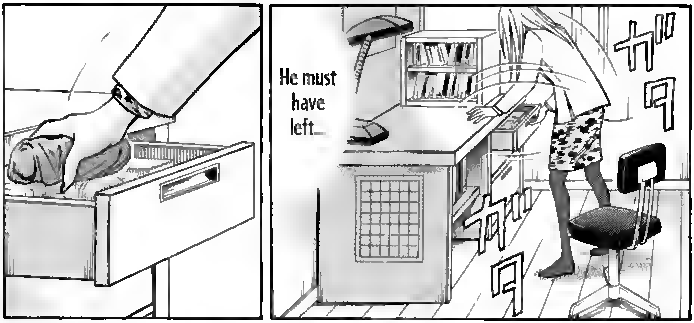
I'LL BRING HER HERE IMMEDIATELY! JUST STAY WHERE YOU ARE!
REI-CHAN WISHES TO MEET YOU TOO!
PLEASE WAIT HERE! DON'T GO ANY-WHERE!!
No... Not really...
Sigh
Trouble-some...
Ah...
暁


Rei-chan!
I'm back.
Ah?
Just where have you been!
Ajino-sensei is here to see you!
IS... IS THERE AN EMERGENCY?
We were looking for you! You didn't even answer your phone!

Eh?
Didn't he promise to take you with him?
I'm speaking the truth... I saw him somewhere at the tunnel!
Sensei will never come to such an awful place.
Hahaha, stop fooling around.
I thought I warned Kai and sensei to stay away from The Edge of the Forest?
But...
In that case he's here to bid you farewell!
But... he's catching a plane to Warsaw tomorrow...
An hour ago...?
This happened about an hour ago.
Forget it, he's probably not there anymore.

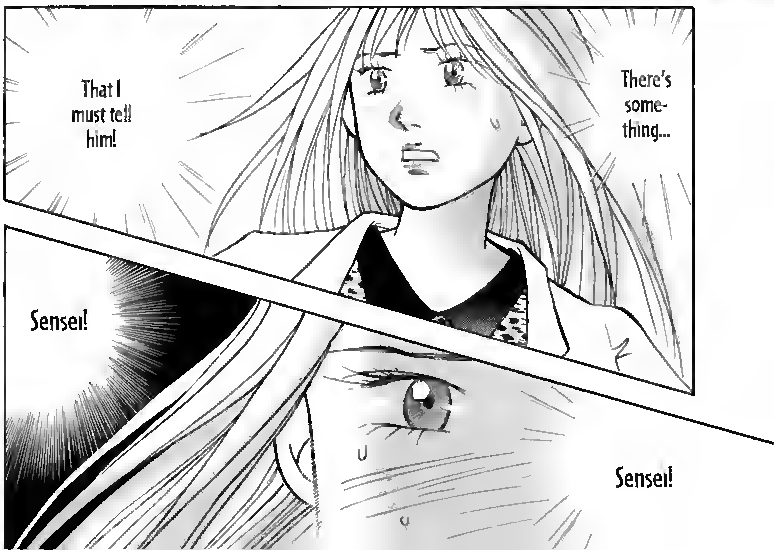
There's still work to be done tonight!
Rei-chan, don't you go looking for him!
Come on! How is it possible for a normal person to wait at this awful place for an hour?
But... He might be still waiting!
Besides, there's nothing we can talk about.
He can't be still waiting there anyway.
I'm not going.
Alright, Alright...
I do have something that I wish to tell him
That isn't true...


I'd probably be unable to meet him.
However, even if I go now

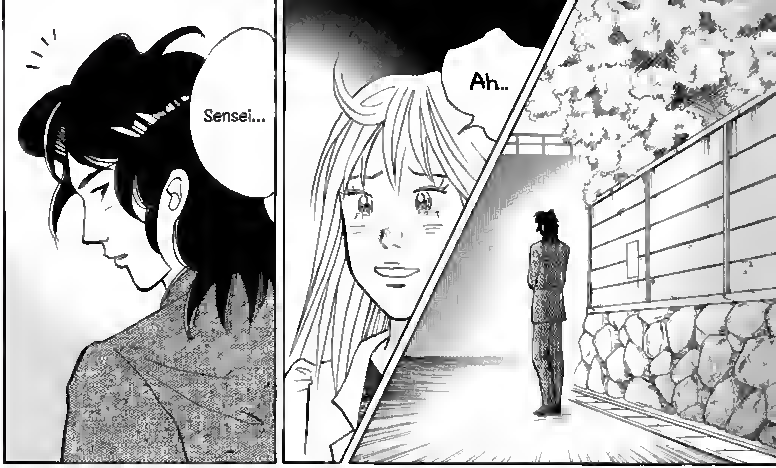

He must have left...

Rei-chan?

If I get to see him...
Eh? Rei-chan!
Ajino-sensei!!
Rei-chan!
暁


That I must te!! him!
There's some-thing...
Sensei!
Sensei!

Huff
Huff
Huff
For all these years...
I've been...
Hello, Rei-chan!
I don't see anyone
I just knew it...



Standing at the Edge of the Forest / END

PIANO NO MORI

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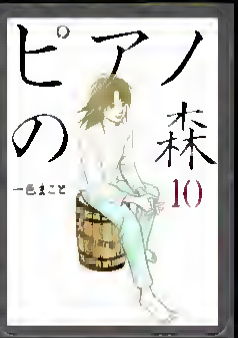

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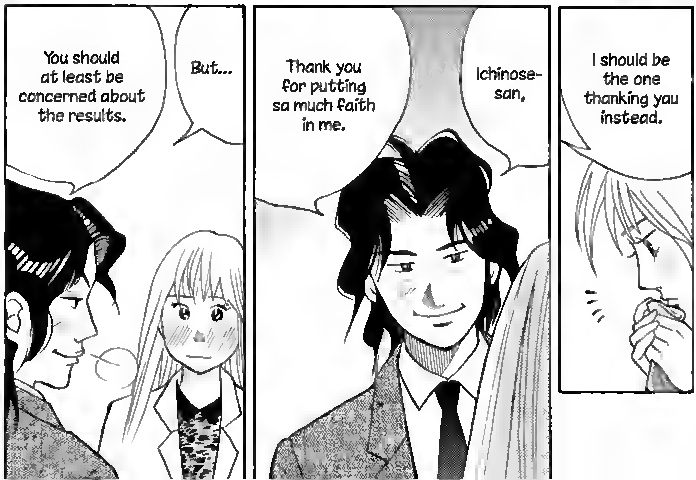
Chapter
111
Shard
of the
Piano

Sensei!!

Ah...

To be honest, I never thaught that I would see you again.
I'll be catching a plane to Warsaw tomorrow so I decided to drop by.
THANK GOD!
I THOUGHT YOU'D ALREADY LEFT...
And my final battle.
This is Kai's first...
It's finally here.
Ichinase-san.
I can assure you that the results will not disappoint you.

I was looking forward to seeing you again...
Sensei, thank you for your efforts.
And wanted to express my gratitude.
I do not know how I should thank you.
The mere thought of sensei tutoring Kai at this juncture...
Sensei, I'm not concerned about the results.


You should at least be concerned about the results.
But...
Thank you for putting so much faith in me.
Ichinose-san,
I should be the one thanking you instead.

You should be supportive to Kai now that he's battling alone in a foreign country.
Is there anything you would like me to pass on to him?
Well...
This...
If Kai is encountering difficulties, please give him this.
This is...
Can I have a look?
Of course...

But I find that this can be used as Kai's talisman...
Perhaps you might find this childish...
This is...

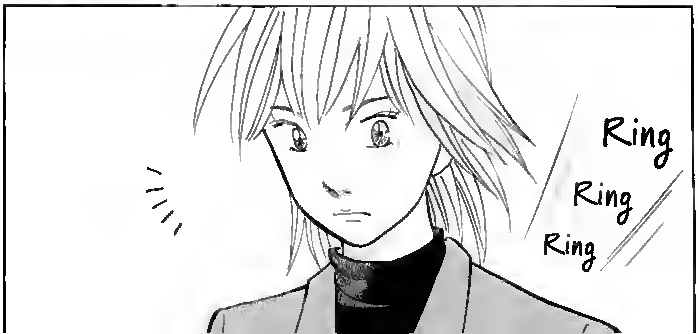
This is—
!!!!

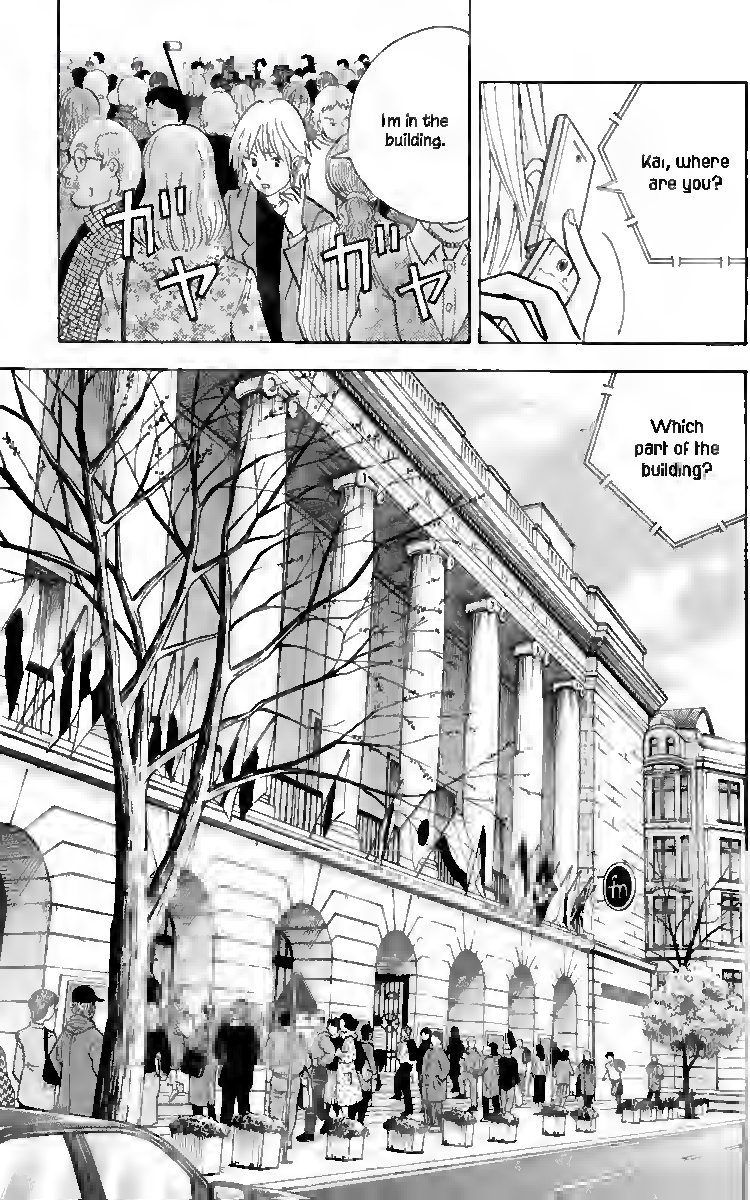
The piano in the forest which was struck by lightning
And burned to ashes
The shard of the piano
Sensei?
Thank you.

This is a very precious talisman.
Sensei... Will we have a chance to meet again?
Of course, I promise.

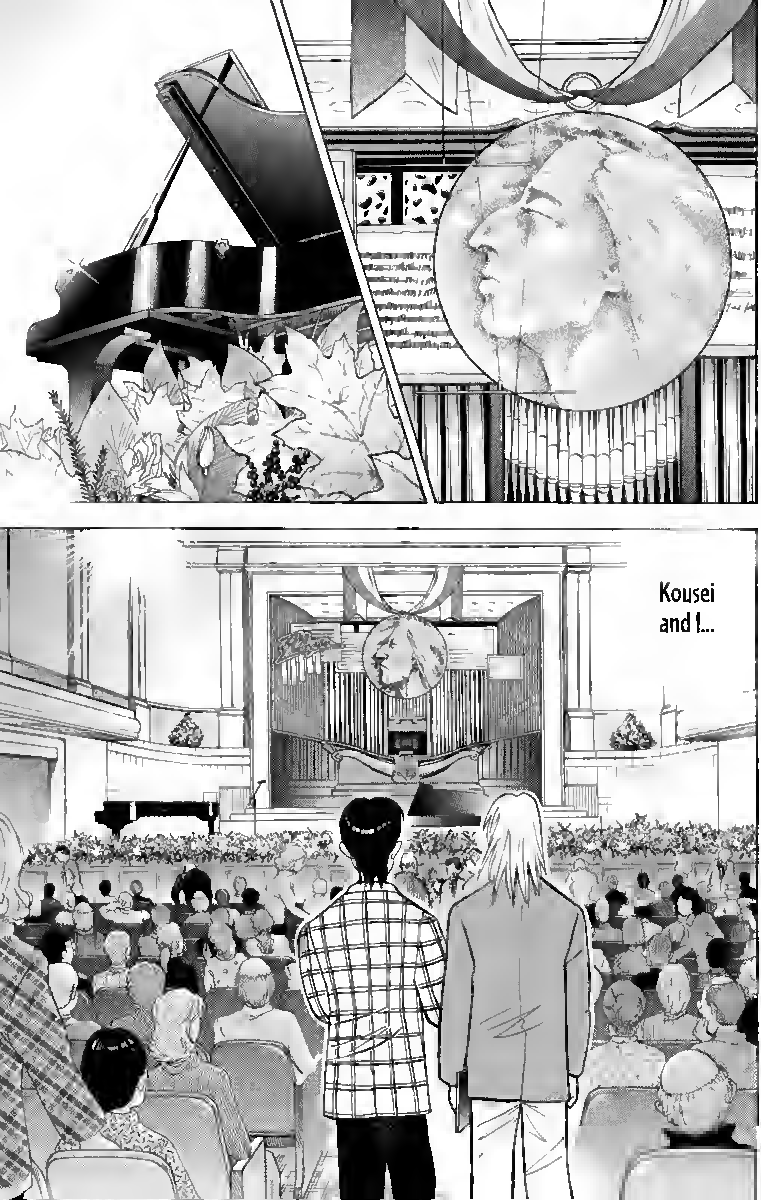
……
We...
Kai.

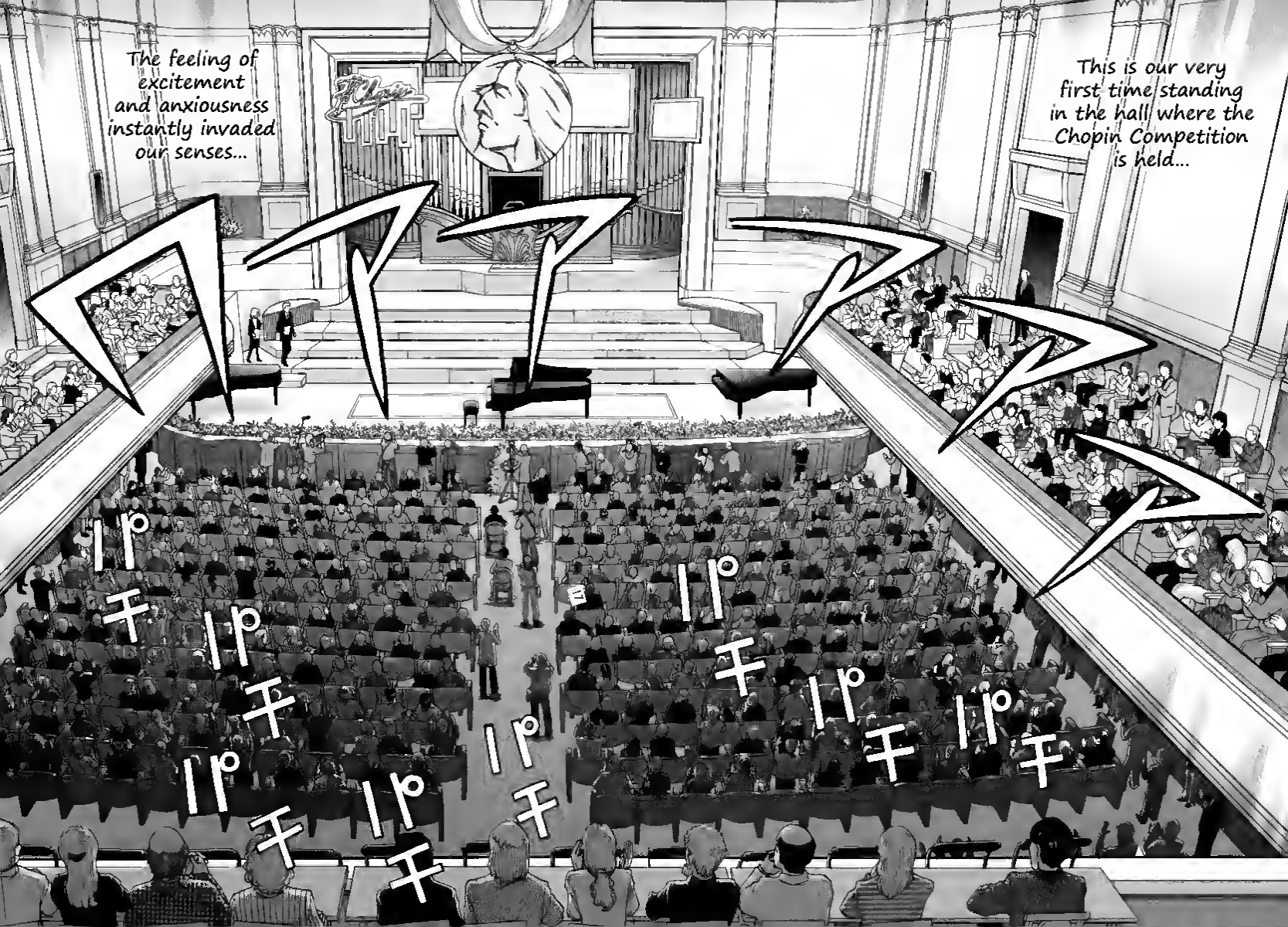
No,
It should
be you.
You must win this
competition and
never give in.


Ring
Ring
Ring


I'm in the building.
Kai, where are you?
Which part of the building?

The first floor...
カツカツ
カツカツ
カツカツ
Kousei!
Ahaha! Found you!


Kousei and I...


The feeling of excitement and anxiousness instantly invaded our senses...
This is our very first time standing in the hall where the Chopin Competition is held...
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The competition will officially begin.
In just a few minutes...

PIANO NO MORI

by Isshiki Makoto

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Piano No Mori Ch 111

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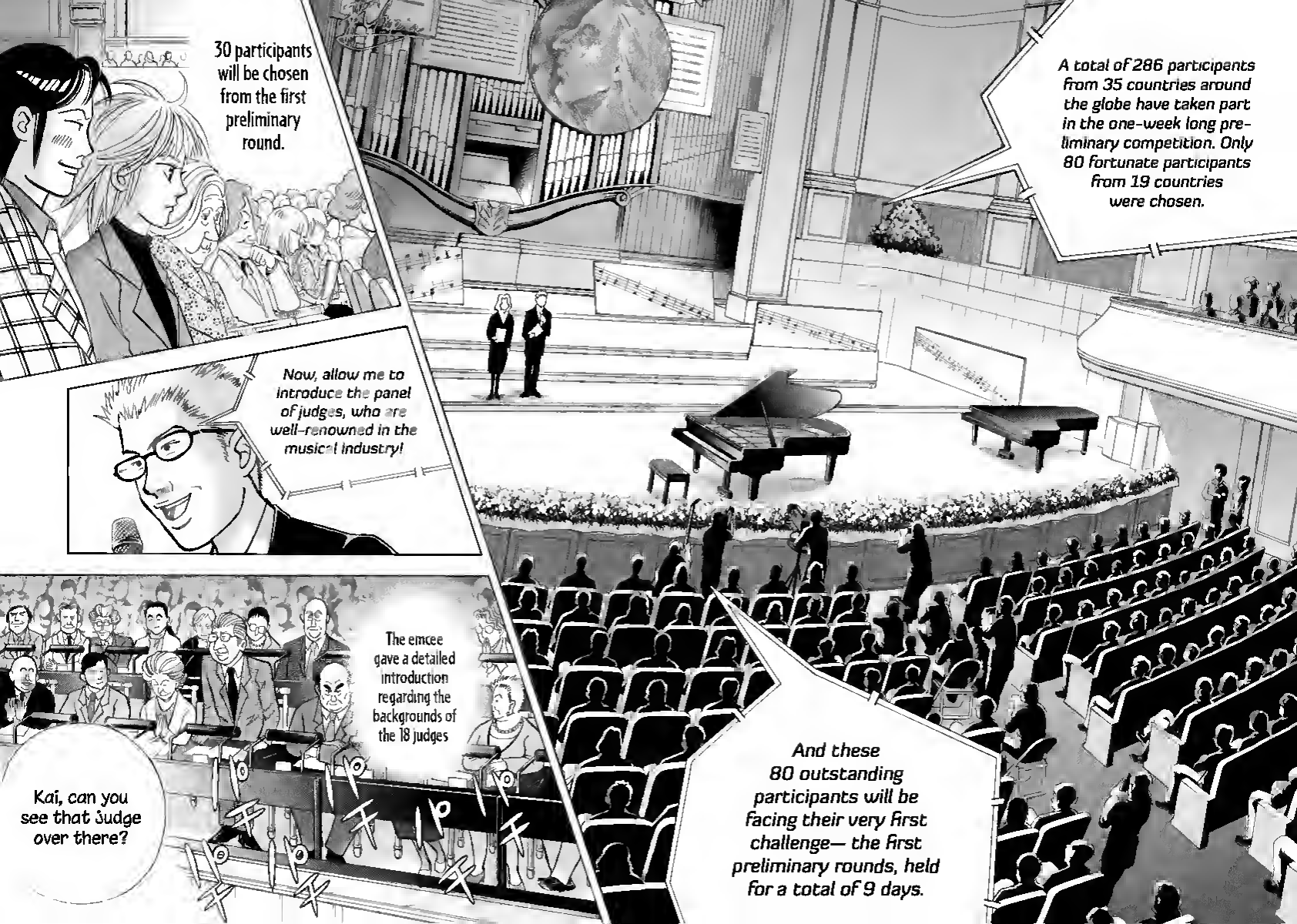
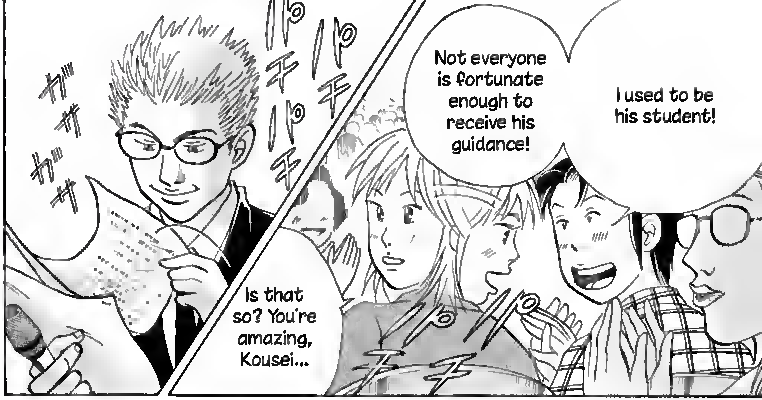
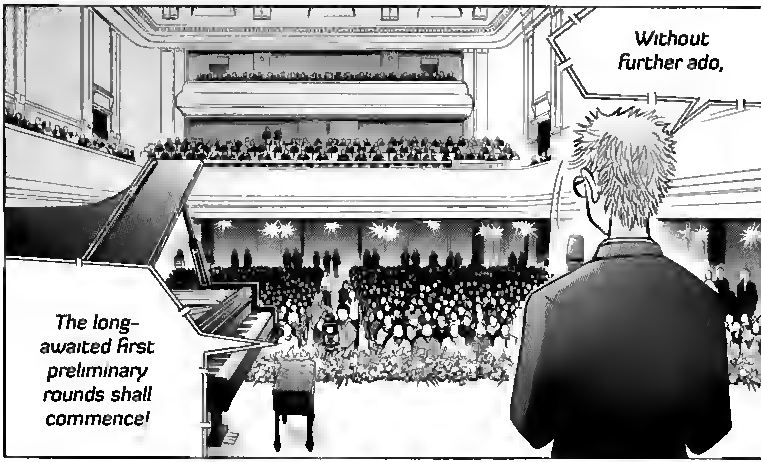
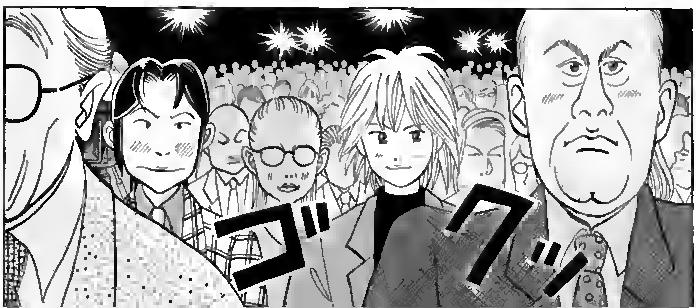
Chapter 112 Must-Knows of the Chopin Competition


30 participants will be chosen from the first preliminary round.
A total of 286 participants from 35 countries around the globe have taken part in the one-week long preliminary competition. Only 80 fortunate participants from 19 countries were chosen.
Now, allow me to introduce the panel of judges, who are well-renowned in the musical industry!
The emcee gave a detailed introduction regarding the backgrounds of the 18 judges
Kai, can you see that judge over there?
And these 80 outstanding participants will be facing their very first challenge— the first preliminary rounds, held for a total of 9 days.


カサカサ
パチパチパチ
Not everyone is fortunate enough to receive his guidance!
I used to be his student!
Is that so? You're amazing, Kousei...


Without further ado,
The long-awaited first preliminary rounds shall commence!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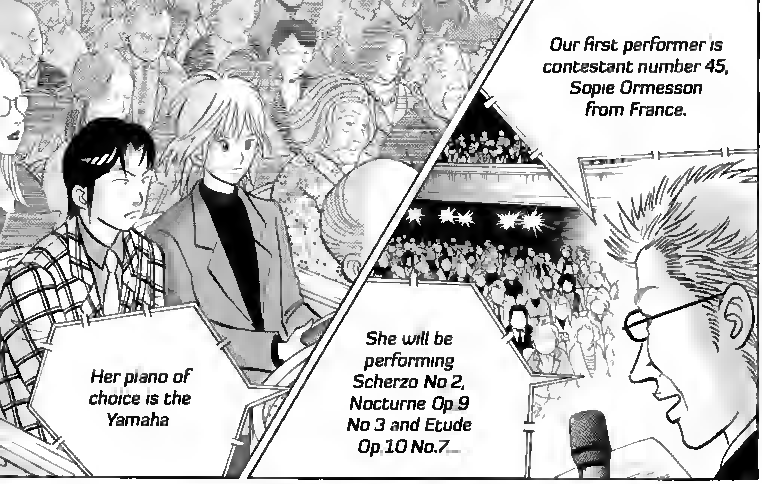
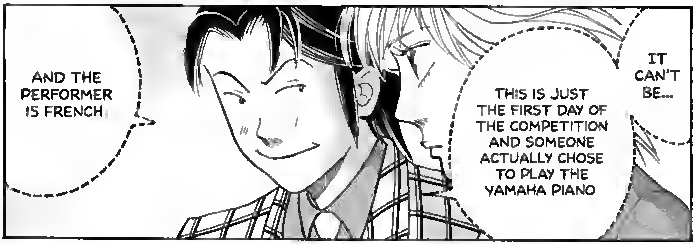
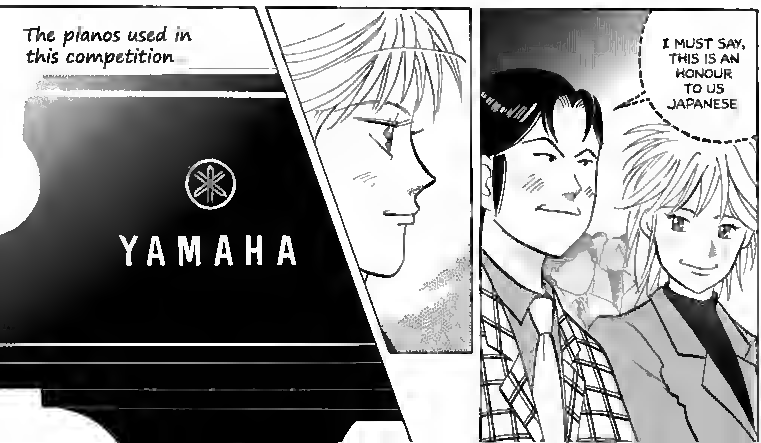
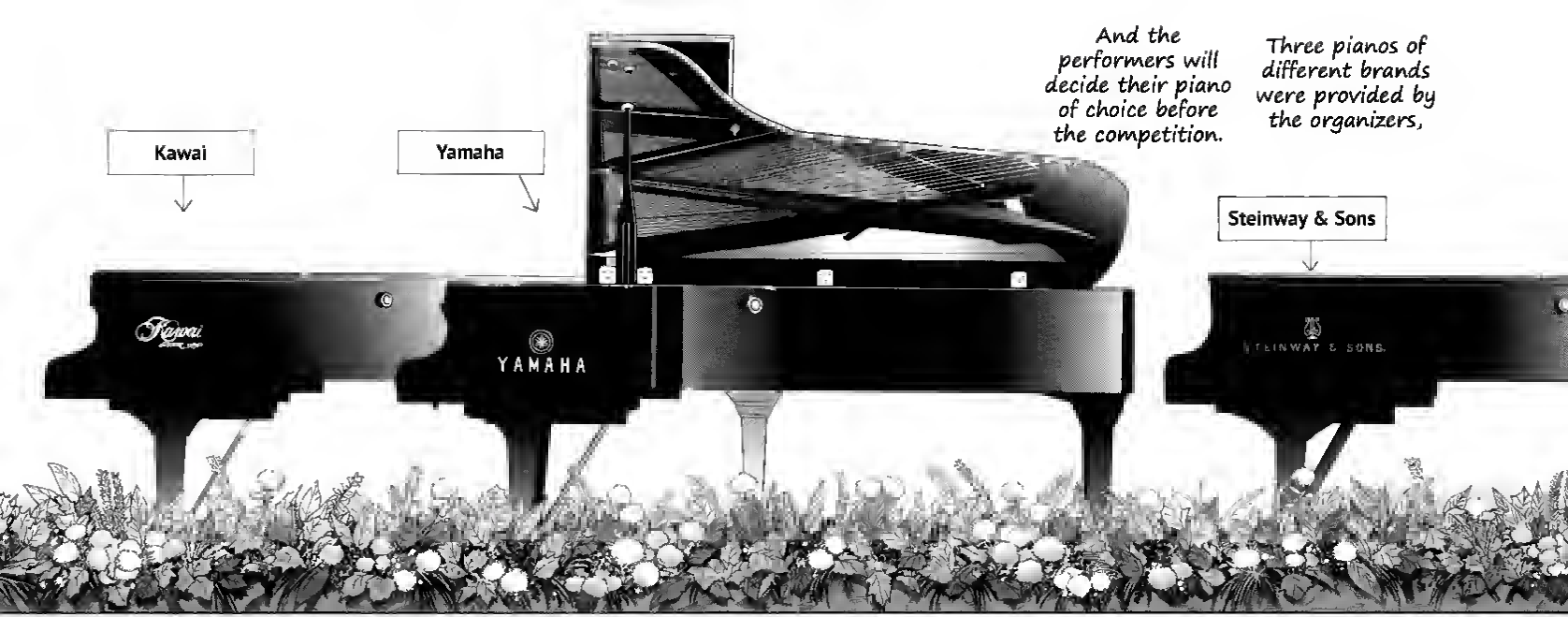

Our first performer is contestant number 45, Sopie Ormesson from France.
She will be performing Scherzo No 2, Nocturne Op 9 No 3 and Etude Op 10 No.7...
Her piano of choice is the Yamaha


AND THE PERFORMER IS FRENCH
THIS IS JUST THE FIRST DAY OF THE COMPETITION AND SOMEONE ACTUALLY CHOSE TO PLAY THE YAMAHA PIANO
IT CAN'T BE...


The pianos used in this competition...
YAMAHA
I MUST SAY, THIS IS AN HONOUR TO US JAPANESE



And the performers will decide their piano of choice before the competition.

Three pianos of different brands were provided by the organizers,

Therefore, the Chopin competition isn't just a battlefield for the pianists, it also provides a stage which enables each manufacturing company's tuners to compete.

There she is!

Today's first performer!

ドキドキドキドキドキドキドキドキ

In order to make sure their own piano will gain the participants' favour and to make it stand out in the competition, the tuners put in their best efforts to ensure their piano is in its best state.

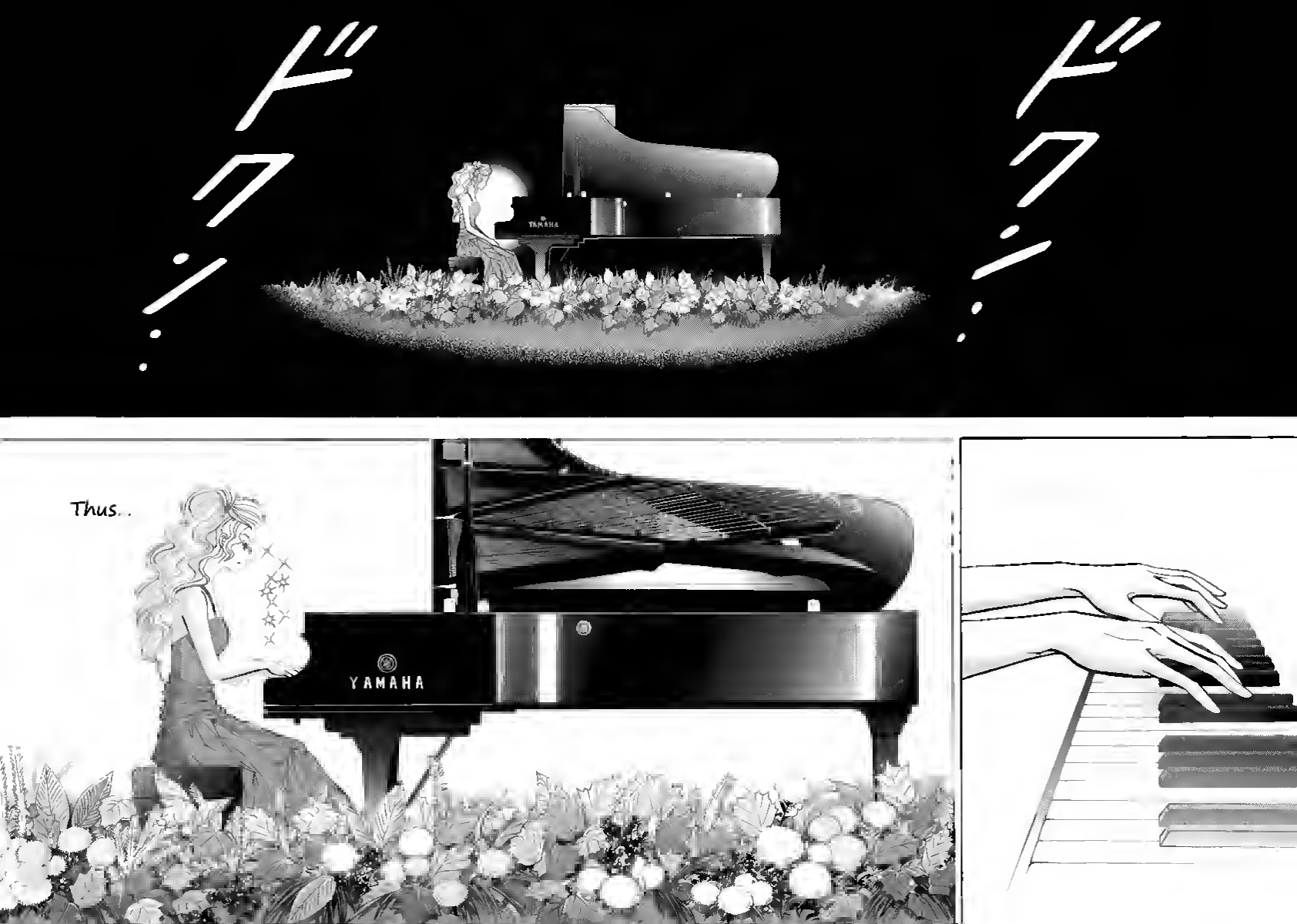
Yamaha's tuner line-up

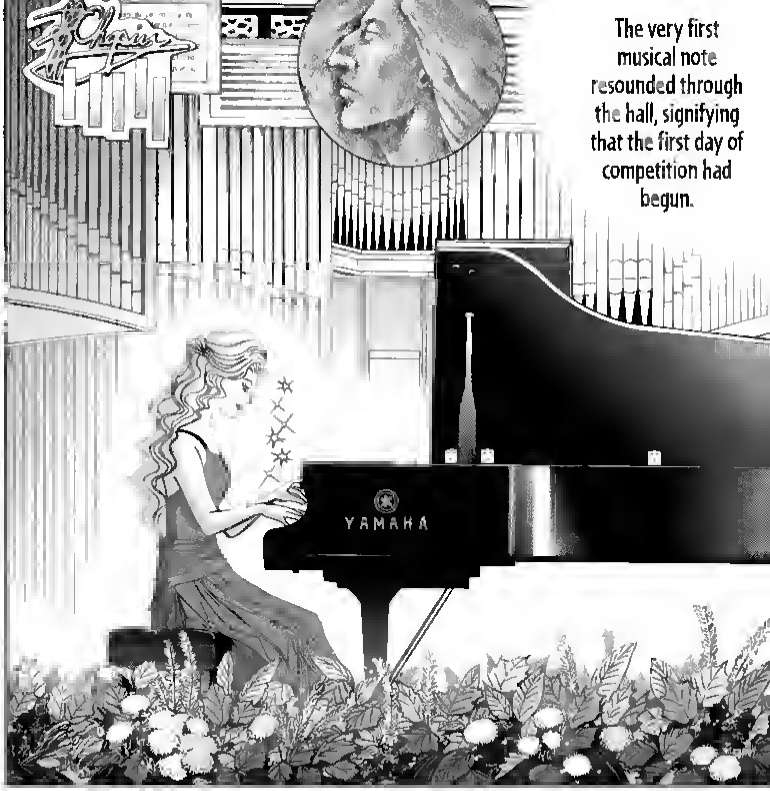
Kawai's tuner line-up

Steinway & Sons' tuner line-up

The order of appearance for the first preliminary rounds is arranged in alphabetical order, beginning with the letter 'O'.
Therefore, I'll have to wait till the last day for my turn to perform.

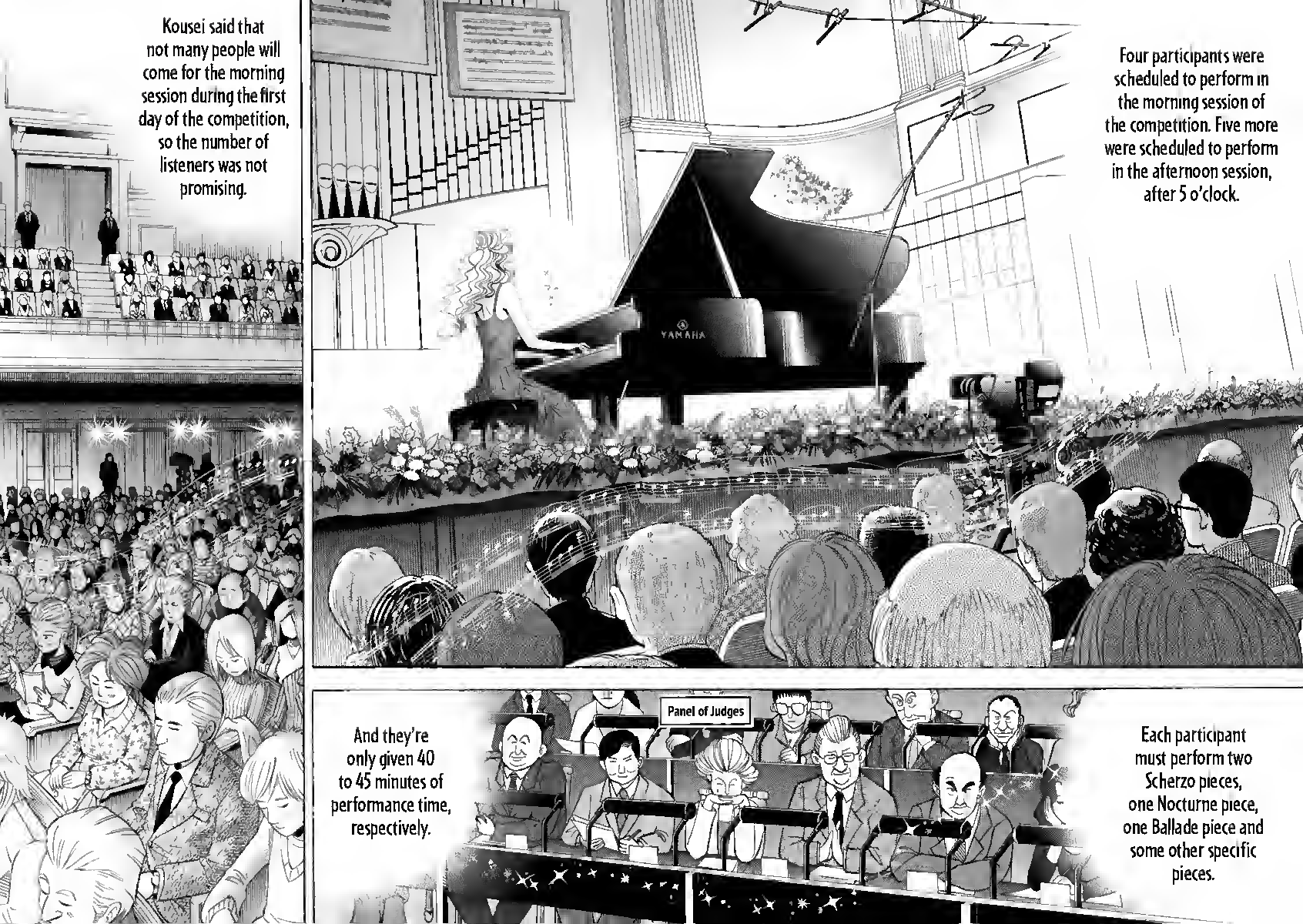
CAN'T HELP FEELING ANXIOUS FOR HER...
AND SHE'S ONE OUT-STANDING BEAUTY...
I WISH I COULD PERFORM IN HER PLACE
IT MUST BE VERY STRESSFUL TO BE THE FIRST PERFORMER.
I'm glad they didn't begin with the letter 'I'
ドゥ
The huge hall,
Was immediately engulfed in silence.


ドゥ
ドゥ
YAMAHA
Thus..
YAMAHA


The Piano Forest
The very first musical note resounded through the hall, signifying that the first day of competition had begun.
YAMAHA

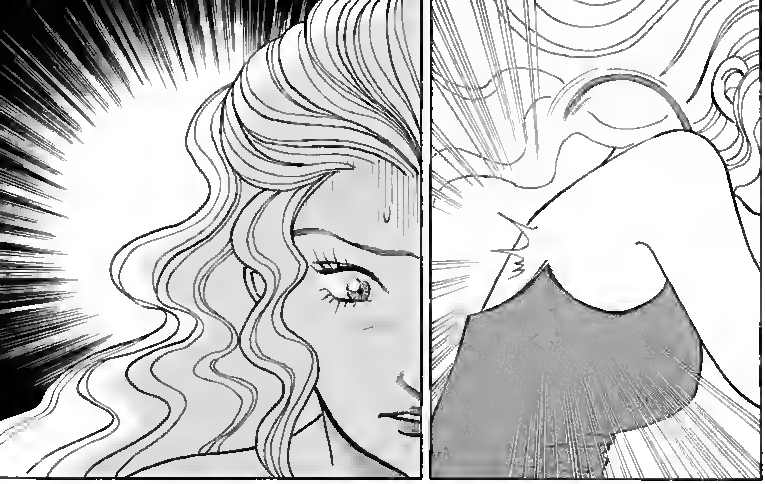
Scherzo No.2.

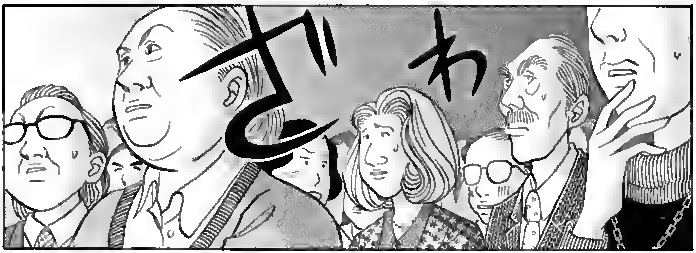
Turned out to be the opening piece for the competition.
This refreshing and crisp piece by Chopin,
Etude Op 10 No 7
Followed by...
Nocturne Op.9 No 3
Op 10 No 8


Kousei said that not many people will come for the morning session during the first day of the competition, so the number of listeners was not promising.
Four participants were scheduled to perform in the morning session of the competition. Five more were scheduled to perform in the afternoon session, after 5 o'clock.
YAMAHA
And they're only given 40 to 45 minutes of performance time, respectively.
Panel of Judges
Each participant must perform two Scherzo pieces, one Nocturne piece, one Ballade piece and some other specific pieces.

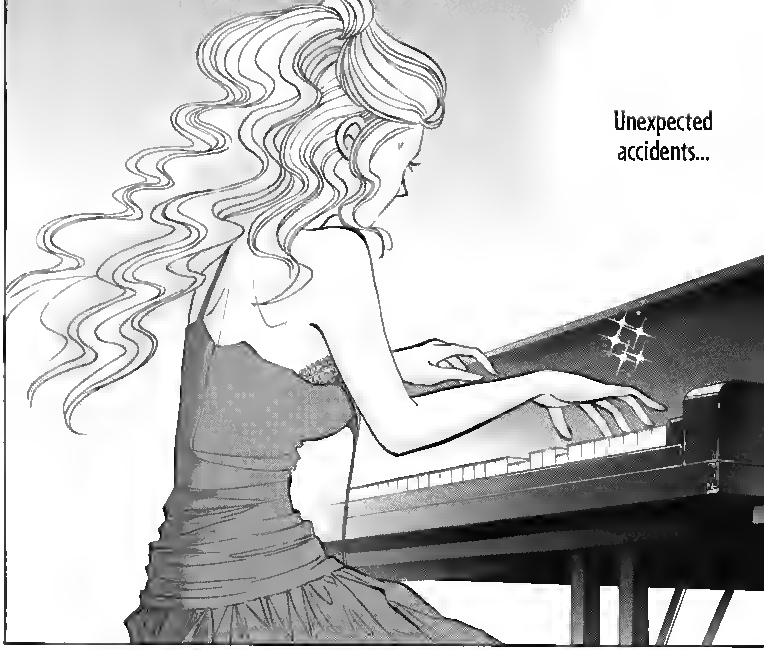
Her magnificent performance,
However, as the first performer for today,

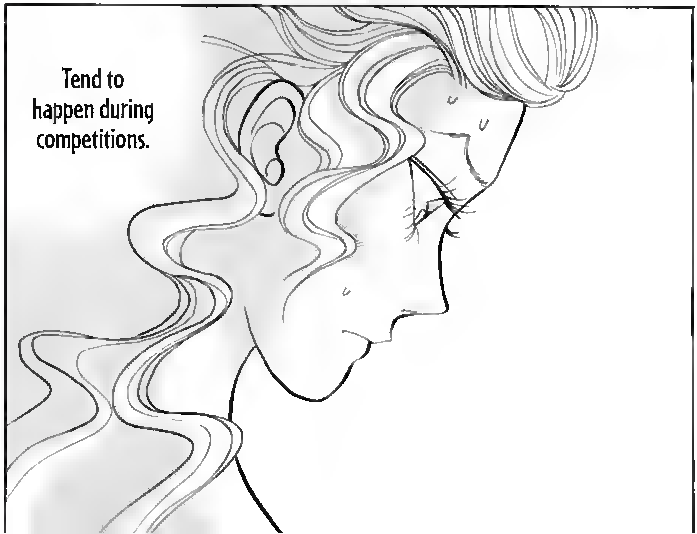
has left a deep impression in the hearts of the audience




ざわ

It's a pity...


Unexpected accidents...


Tend to happen during competitions.

PIANO NO MORI

by Isshiki Makoto

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Piano No Mori Ch 112

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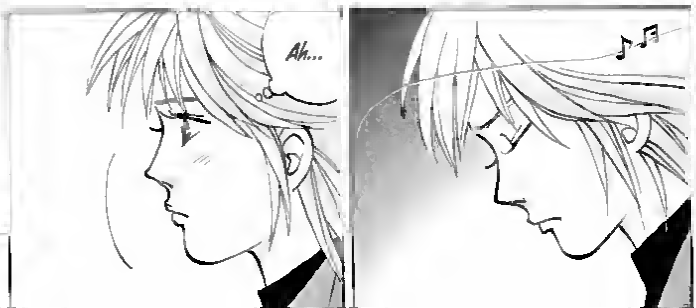
Chapter 113

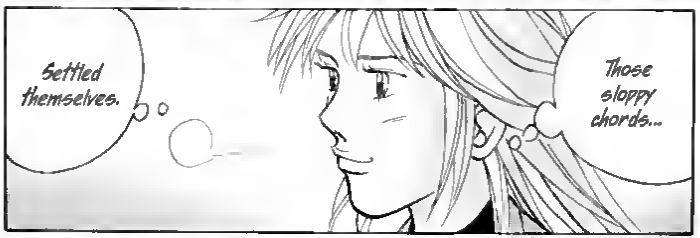
Sopie Ormesson

WHAT BAD TIMING..
ガッ
ざわ
ざわ
THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING! THE STRAP OF HER DRESS SNAPPED!
HOW HORRIBLE.
YOU CAN CLEARLY SEE HER BRA...
SO EMBARRASSING.
DID WE SAY SOMETHING WRONG?
WE'RE BEING GLARED AT!

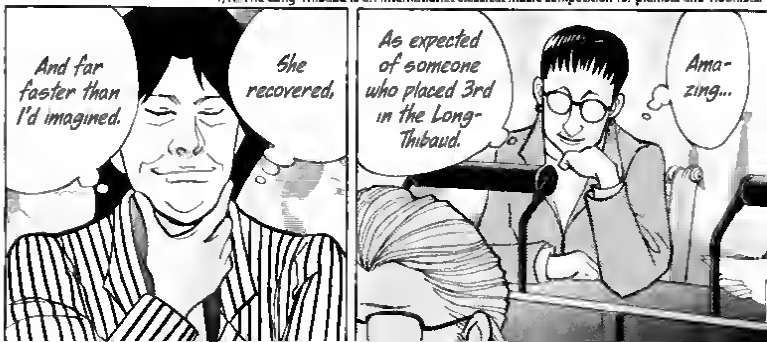
You can do this!
Don't let such a small thing bother you!
Sopie, you can do this!

And the International Chopin Piano Competition's first performer.
Sopie Ormesson is a pianist from France.


Ah...

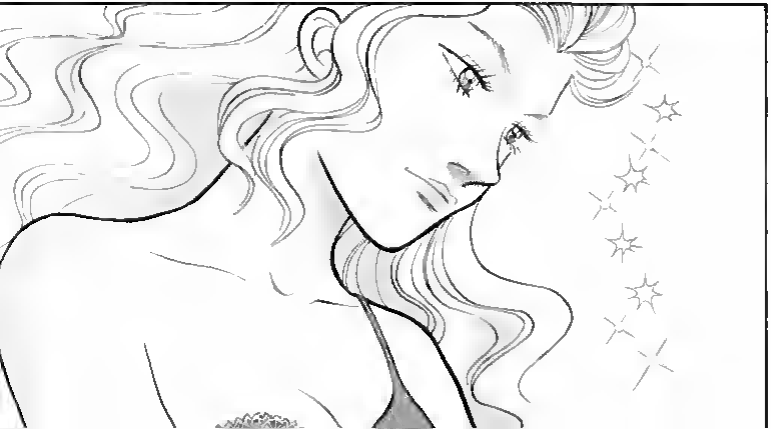


*T/N: The Long-Thibaud is an international classical music competition for pianists and violinists.



This short-sighted audience group...
Even the performer herself has recovered from that small incident; yet they're still troubled by the fact that her bra is showing.
Do these people really know how to appreciate music?

.....

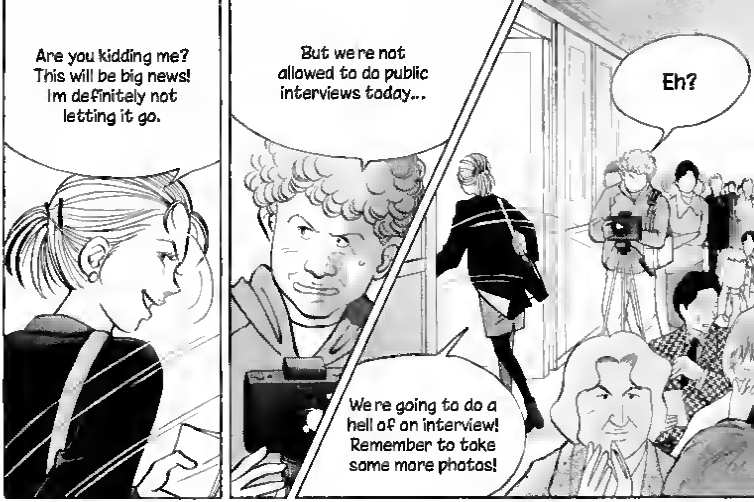


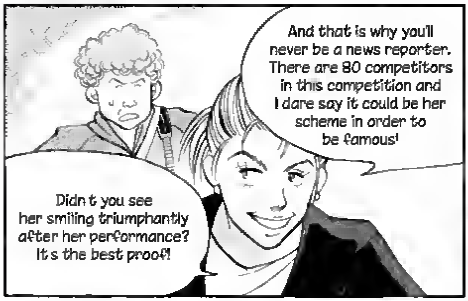
YAMAHA

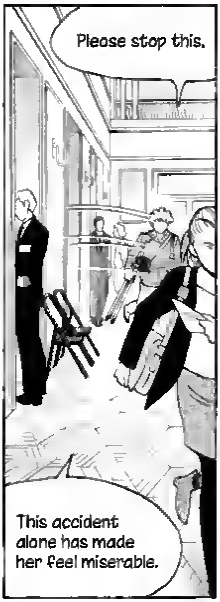
パチパチパチ
She's not only pretty, but very courageous too
パチパチパチ

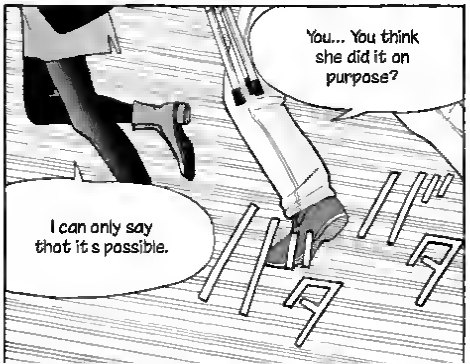
パチパチパチパチパチパチパチパチ
Sopie...
BRAVA!

Brava?
Shouldn't it be Bravo?
He's only pretending that he knows it.
How... How rude! Brava is for females while Bravo is for males!
How could you not have such common sense?
Hot sure
Is that true?
What's with this guy?
パチパチパチ
Good job!
David, let's go!


Are you kidding me? This will be big news! Im definitely not letting it go.
But we're not allowed to do public interviews today...
Eh?
We're going to do a hell of an interview! Remember to take some more photos!

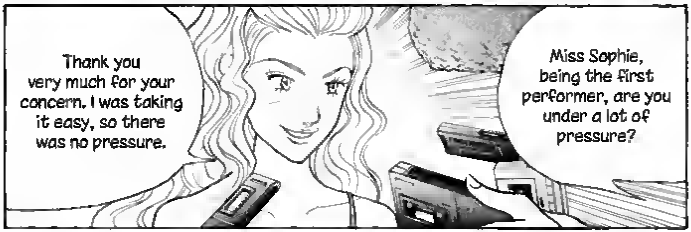

And that is why you'll never be a news reporter. There are 80 competitors in this competition and I dare say it could be her scheme in order to be famous!
Didn't you see her smiling triumphantly after her performance? It's the best proof!


Please stop this.
This accident alone has made her feel miserable.


You... You think she did it on purpose?
I can only say that it's possible.

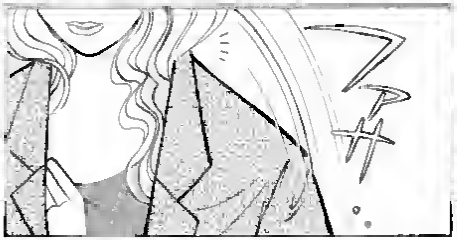
Sopie Ormesson is also a famous model in France too.
How could I let this golden opportunity go?
!
Miss Sopie, could you please spare us some of your time?

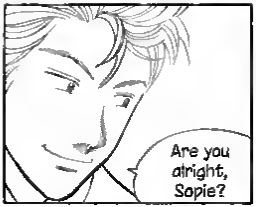
Kousei ...
Whose situation?
I'll go take a look at the situation, I'll be back.
SOPIE'S OF COURSE!
Contestant number 46, Kentarou Ozu from Japan
He will be performing Ballade No 2, Scherzo No 3 Op.39
パ
チ
He said that with no hesitation..
'Sopie's of course'.


Miss Sophie, being the first performer, are you under a lot of pressure?
Thank you very much for your concern. I was taking it easy, so there was no pressure.

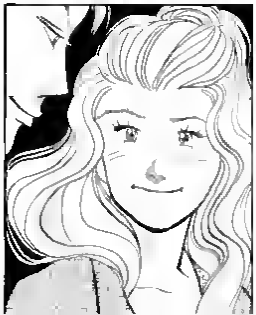
Did that accident affect your mood?
But you recovered rather quickly.
I can only say it's a flaw in this dress' design.
And it happened for the very first time in my life.

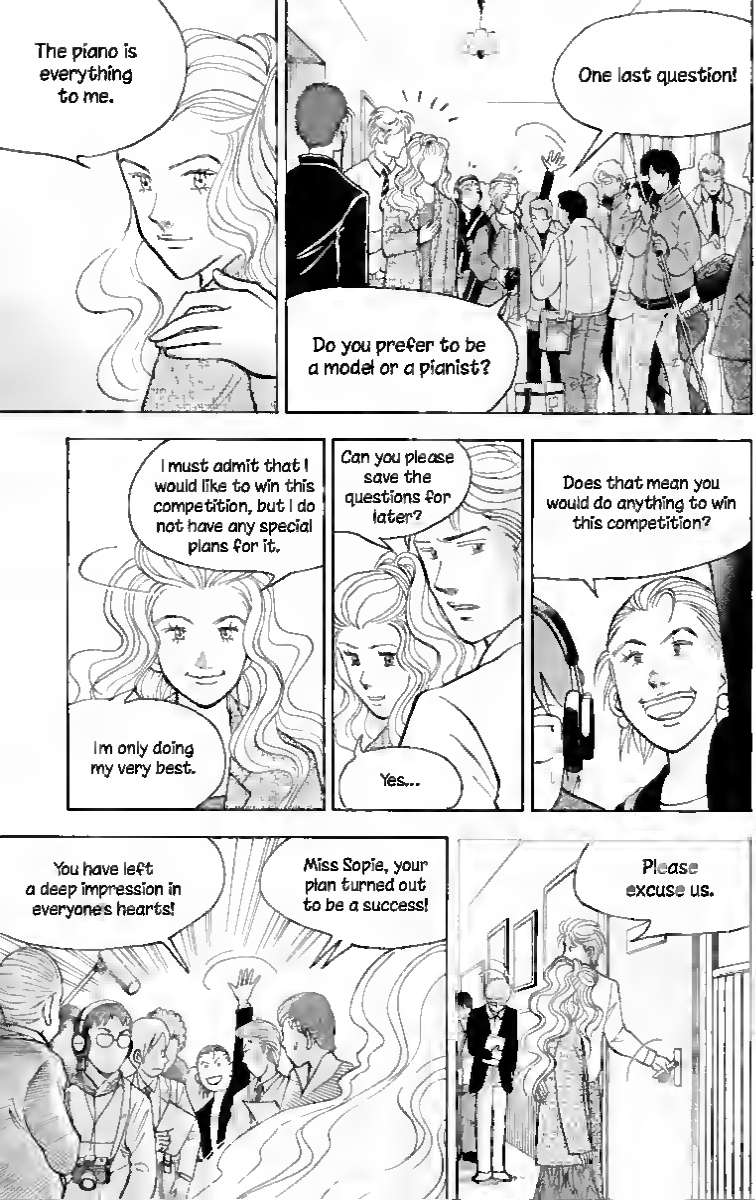
So tall




Are you
alright,
Sophie?

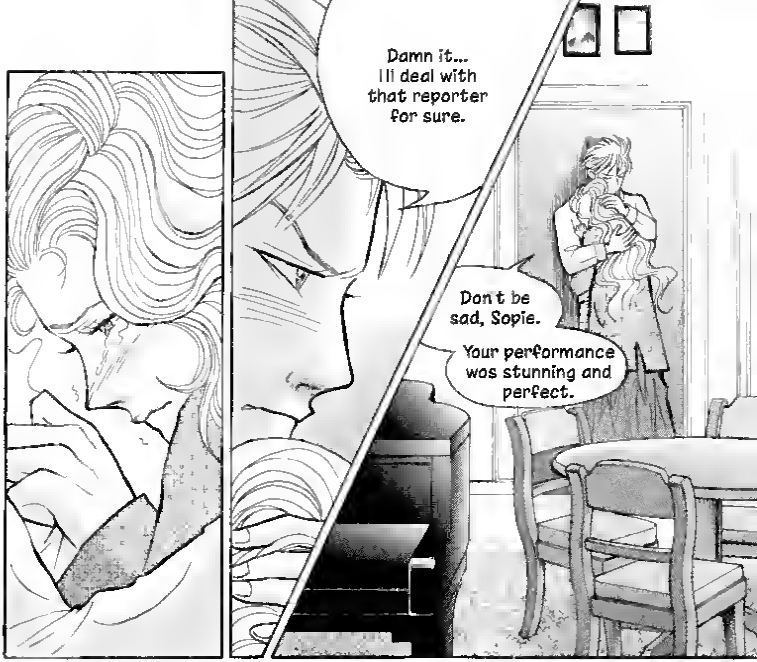
!
Dear reporters,
is it alright if you allow
my sister to have a change
of clothes before resuming
your interviews?

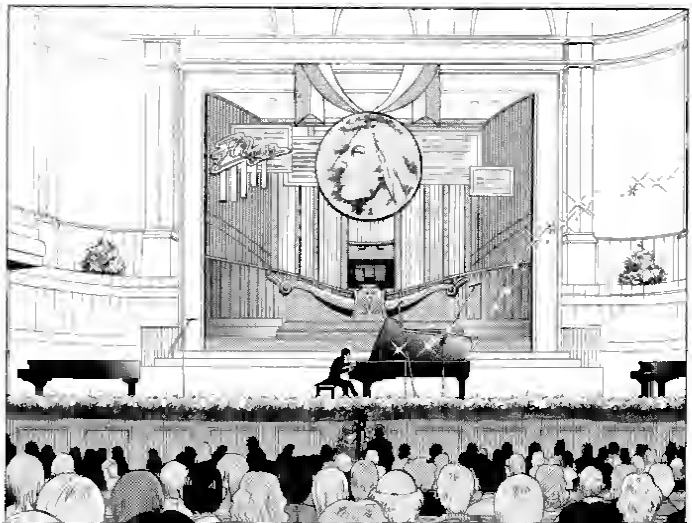



The piano is everything to me.
One last question!
Do you prefer to be a model or a pianist?
I must admit that I would like to win this competition, but I do not have any special plans for it.
I'm only doing my very best.
Can you please save the questions for later?
Yes...
Does that mean you would do anything to win this competition?
You have left a deep impression in everyone's hearts!
Miss Sophie, your plan turned out to be a success!
Please excuse us.

....
There's no one who can beat you!
Hahoho... I should be going.
Got all the photos, David?
Such rudeness!
Which company are you from, miss reporter?
Do you even have the permit to do this interview?

It's expected from a gossip reporter.. It's impossible for a musical reporter to be doing this
Victoria, have you gone nuts?
Sopie's a great pianist! She's won 3rd place in the Long-Thibaud competition. Aren't you afraid that we'll be chased out by the organizers?
Don't worry, I got this.
...
Sopie..


Damn it... I'll deal with that reporter for sure.
Don't be sad, Sopie.
Your performance was stunning and perfect.



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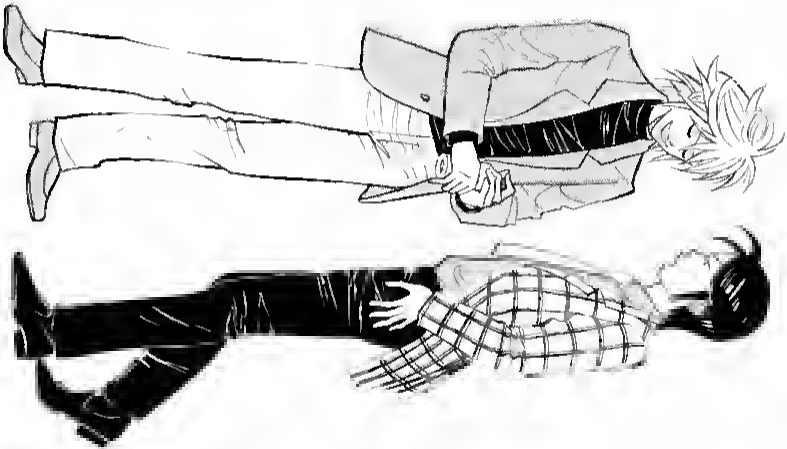
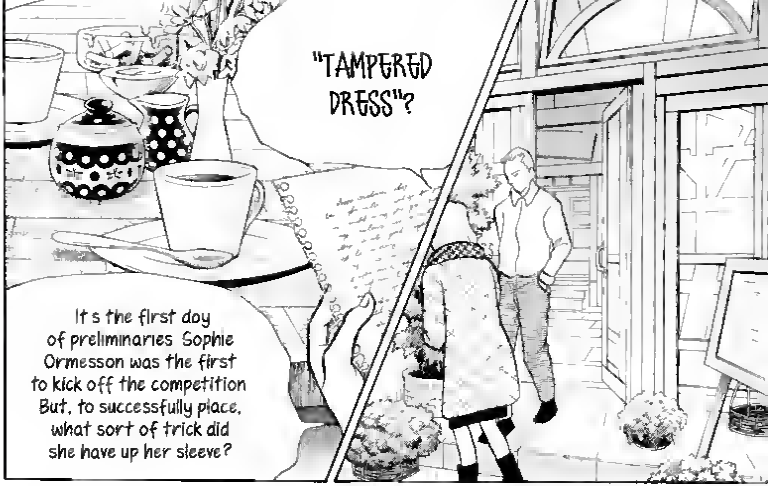
The Best Candidate

Chapter 114




"TAMPERED DRESS"?
It's the first day of preliminaries. Sophie Ormesson was the first to kick off the competition. But, to successfully place, what sort of trick did she have up her sleeve?

But everything did not go as planned since only one strap of her dress managed to snap off. Still, enough buzz was created to leave a firm impression in the hearts of the audience
Apparently it was to "expose" her inner beauty on the world stage.

Victoria! Who told you to write this kind of idiotic gossip?!

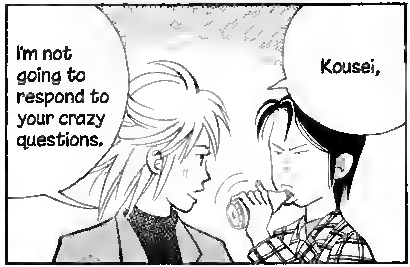
Since you're the boss here, could you please take this more seriously?
At least get me an exclusive interview!
Victoria...
I still don't get why the managing editor put you in charge...
Pay it no mind. I was just bored.
But only with someone who's worth the effort.
Relax! Of course I'll get you your exclusive.
Wei Pang? I'm not interested in the Chinese.
Listen up! Today's highlight is the performer who played last in the preliminary this morning— Wei Pang.

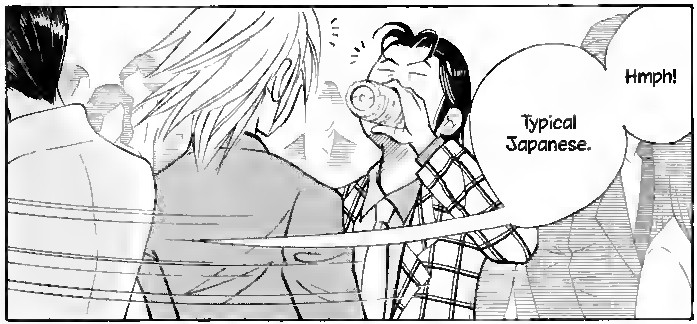
That's your problem.
Wei Pang has been the crowd favorite during this competition!
HOW DARE HE TALK LIKE THAT, "LEAVE A FIRM IMPRESSION"...!
ギリ
WHAT AN ANNOYING GUY..
....
And that female reporter is even worse. Unbelievable!

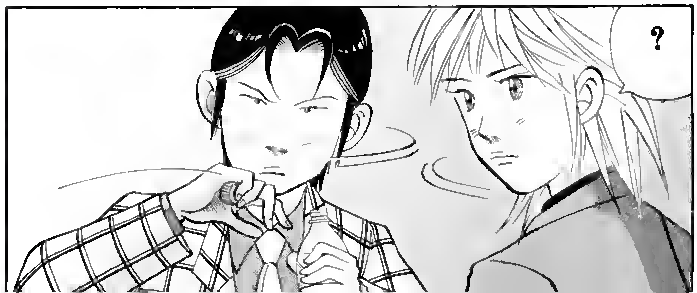
Just ignore her...
So that was what you're going on about...
It was obvious that female reporter was being sarcastic and trying to make fun of her dress mishap!
Sophie was the first one to perform. There was no one else before her...
Eh?
It's not that simple.
But fortunately she didn't let it get to her and continued with her performance.
How embarrassing that must have been, in front of everybody...
Oh, poor Sophie...
How is that the same?
Kai, would you have the balls to play piano in front of all those people in only your underwear?

So how about it, would you have the balls to continue after that?
it'd be the same as going on stage without your underwear.
No, it's even worse than that,

Oh, please---!
The amount of shame Sophie has to bear is exactly the same!


Kousei,
I'm not going to respond to your crazy questions.

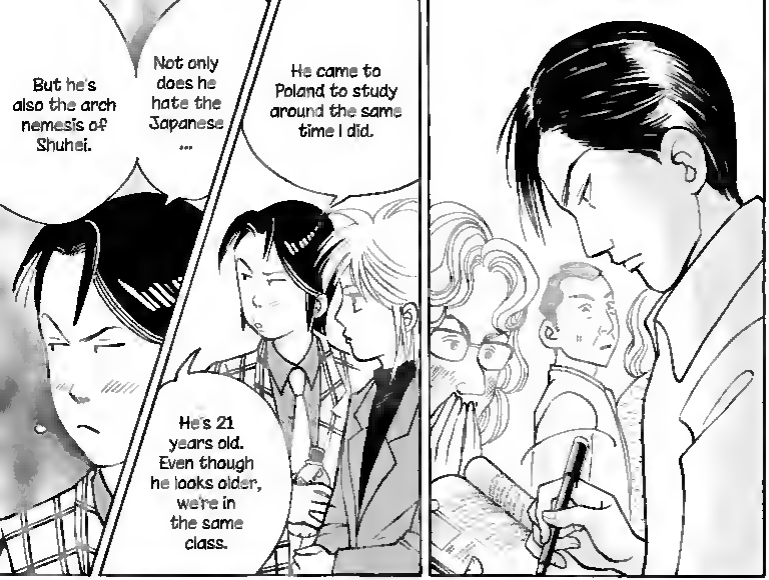

Hmph!
Typical Japanese.

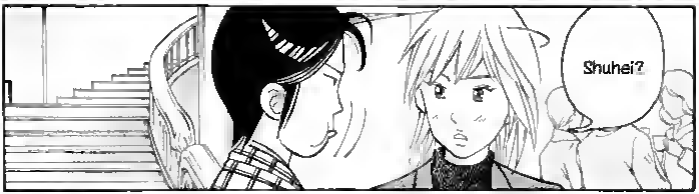

?

Kousei, I'll answer your question!
Hmph!
I'd continue with my performance without hesitation- even if I was naked.
Kousei, if I were you, I'd just pack my bags and go back to Japan.

Does he look like a friend of mine? I was about to kick his ass!
Who was that? One of your friends?

Ah, that Chinese guy.
Wei Pang?
His name is Wei Pang.


He came to Poland to study around the same time I did.
Not only does he hate the Japanese ...
But he's also the arch nemesis of Shuhei.
He's 21 years old. Even though he looks older, we're in the same class.


Shuhei?

Most people wouldn't be able to cantinue after an incident like that.
Sophie Ormesson, What she did was very impres- sive for such a young girl.
Ha ha...
But father, all yau care about tonight is Wei Pang right?
Very impressive, indeed.
That's right!
...They let the best candidate perfarm first taday. Laaks like this com- petitian will be quite splendid...
but now, I've slowly gotten used to his style.
I was really surprised the first time I saw him perform,

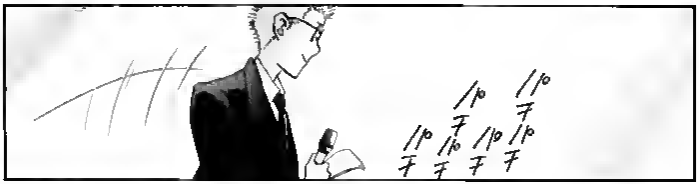
BUT DAVID, IT'S BAD TO RUN AFTER EATING!
Faster, Victoria!
That is why I told you not to eat so much!
Wei Pang is about to start!
HAA
HAA
HAA
HAA
Early in the morning and on the second day of the competition the hall is totally packed.
All the focus is on Wei Pang, who is about to start!

Don't you worry about that.
You see, Wei Pang was born poor, and grew up in poverty.
As I said, someone like that does not pique my interest.
When Ormesson took 3rd place at Long-Thibaud, the winner was none other than Wei Pang.
HAA
HAA

In other words, he's just like you. Someone from the wrong side of the tracks...!

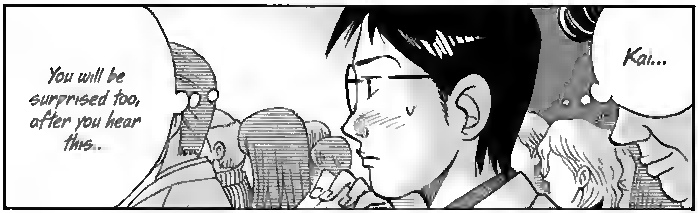
Ah right, how come Wei Pang is fluent in Japanese?
I should pay close attention to his performance.
Looks like the old man was right about Wei Pang.
WEI PANG
Wei Pang...

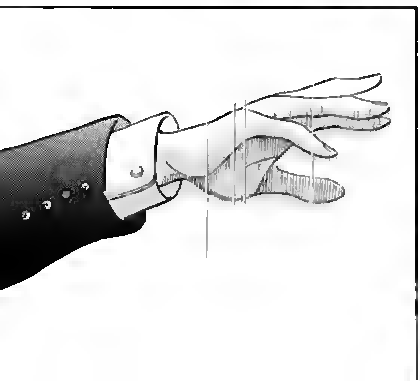
But that's not important.
Really?
I've also heard rumors that he's actually part Japanese...
Even I speak three different languages! Japanese... English... and Polish...
That's because he's mastered five different languages.

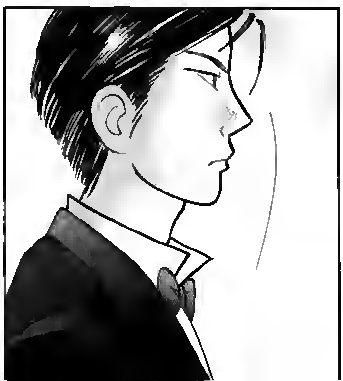


Number 48 coming all the way from China Wei Pang!
The first song will be Nocturne Op.55 No.2, Humoresque Op.10 No.12, Op.25 No.6...

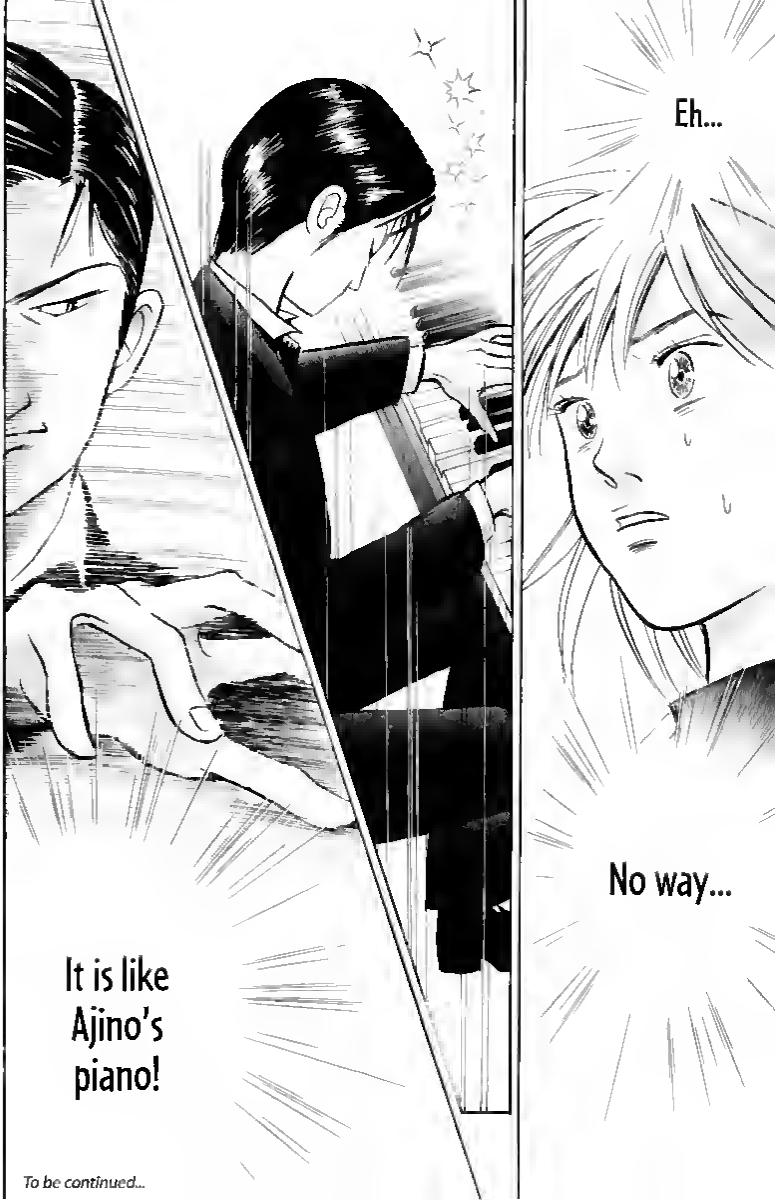
He chooses a Steinway piano.
STEIN
Let the show begin


You will be surprised too, after you hear this..
Kai...





Eh?
STEINWAY & SONS



To be continued...

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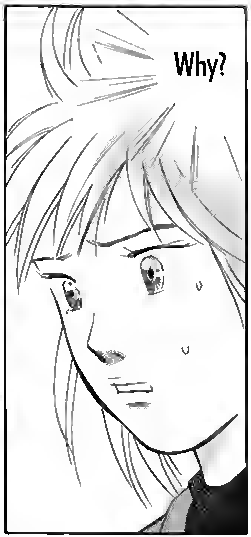
Chapter 115 Wei Pang (1)

Ajino's notes!
STEINWAY & SON

Why is it Wei Pang?!

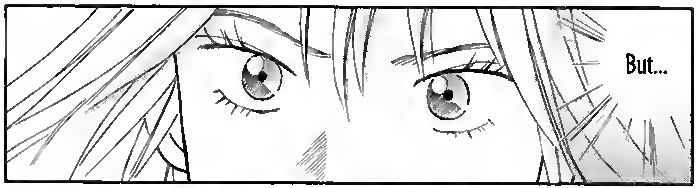

Why?

Why is it Ajino's piano style?
Why...

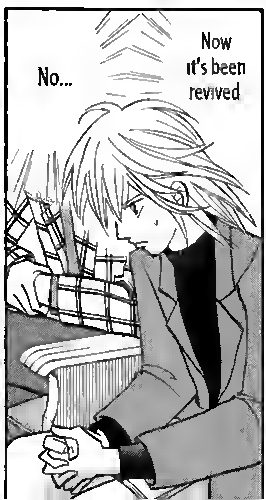
The pianist who inherited Ajino's playing style...
Why did he appear here?

All these years I've spend so much effort searching everywhere for Ajino's portraits and music..
I can't be mistaken.
Indulging in each of his performances over and over again..
Yes..
That's all? There's no more?
SFX: Thud

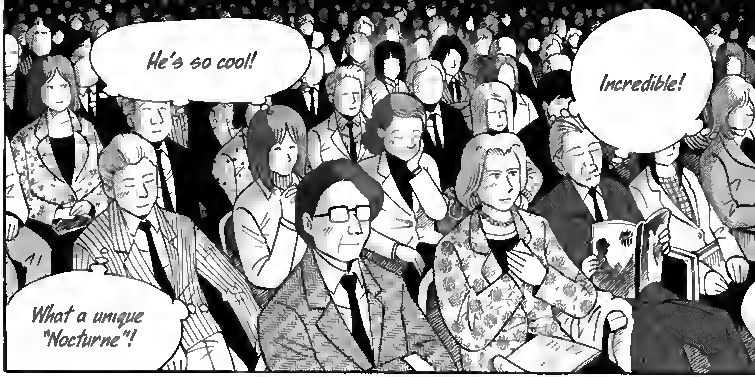
Ajino told me, "Don't copy my playing," as a reason for confiscating all those materials
Ever since then, I have never heard his playing
Thief!
When the time comes, I'll return these to you.
Collecting so many materials couldn't have been easy


But...

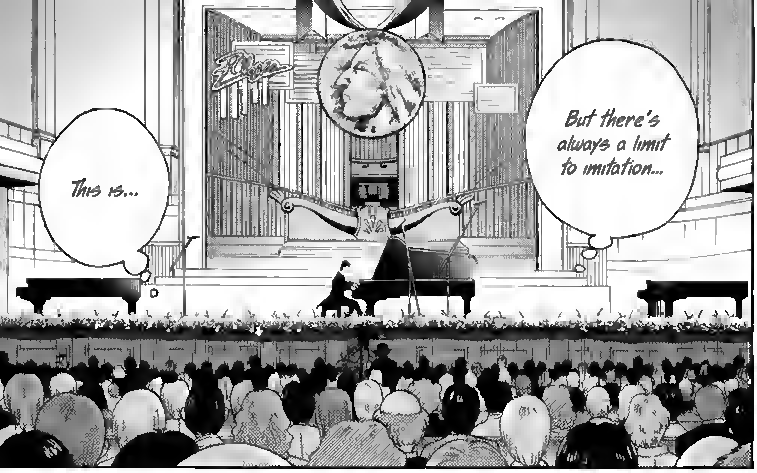
It might have never disappeared before...
This is...


No...
Now it's been revived

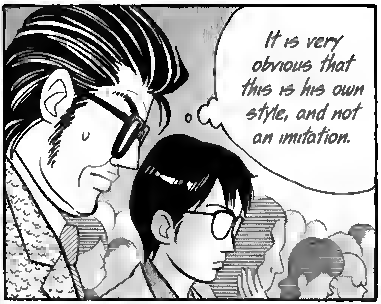
Ajino-
sensei's
piano
style!

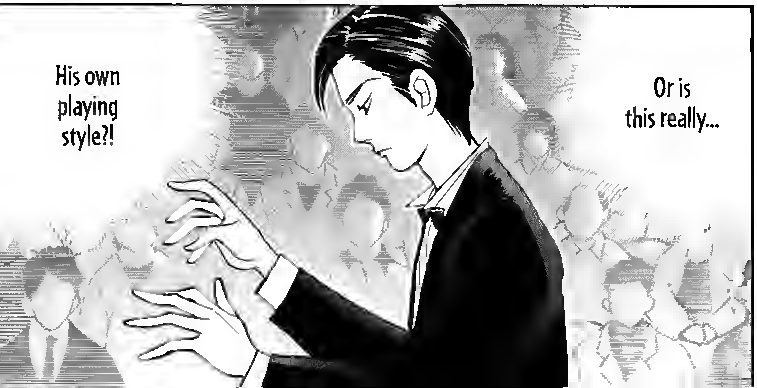

He's so cool!
Incredible!
What a unique "Nocturne"!

This is nearly the same as Ajino's playing!
I really can't believe it...
Could he be imitating Ajino's style?!
As someone who's always "treated Ajino as an enemy", I definitely can't be mistaken.
Furthermore, while going to Warsaw, I've only heard it live once.


This is...
But there's always a limit to imitation...

To make someone else's style his own?!
Just how much effort and determination did he have...


It is very obvious that this is his own style, and not an imitation.

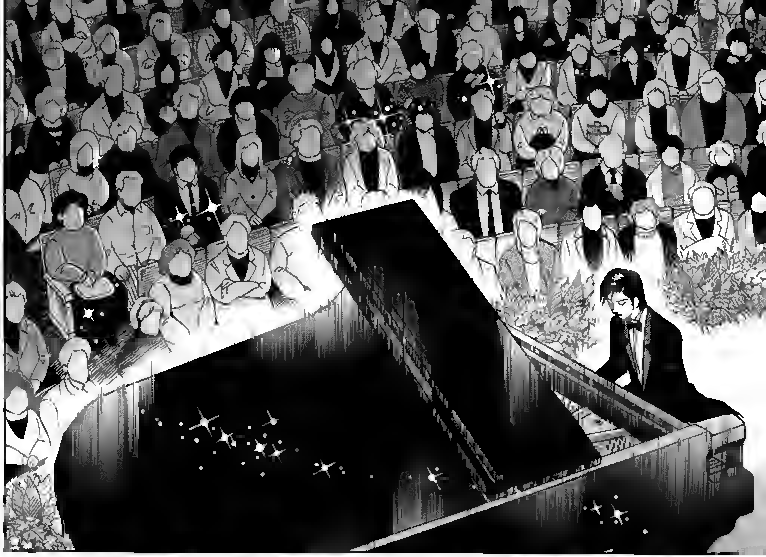

His own playing style?!
Or is this really...

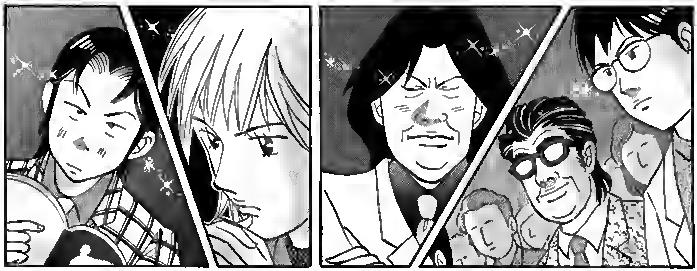
. . . .
There hasn't been a single thing about this.
But in all of the news reports about Wei Pang...
Ajino Sousuke?!
Who is he?
A Japanese?

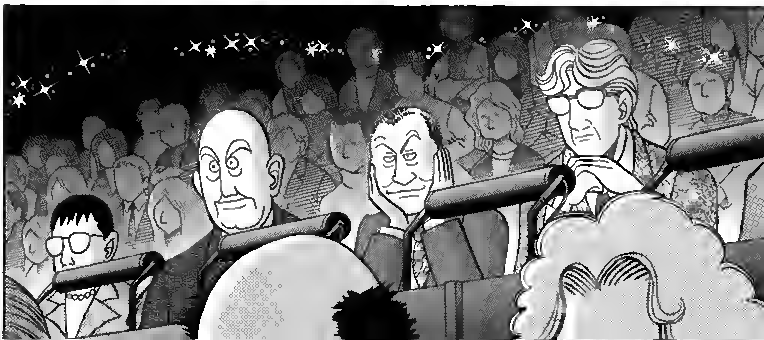
We are alike?
Are you saying that I imitated that Japanese?
No... not imitation, but maybe you were influenced by him...
Amamiya...
Are you insulting me?!
That's not what I meant... Still, being influenced by him isn't something bad...
Shut up...
Huh?
ttaha

If you don't want to die, then you'd better stay far away from me
If you say one more word, I'll kill you
You...
...and hearing pampered brats like you talk...
Just seeing your rich-boy face...
SFX Step
.....
...make me sick

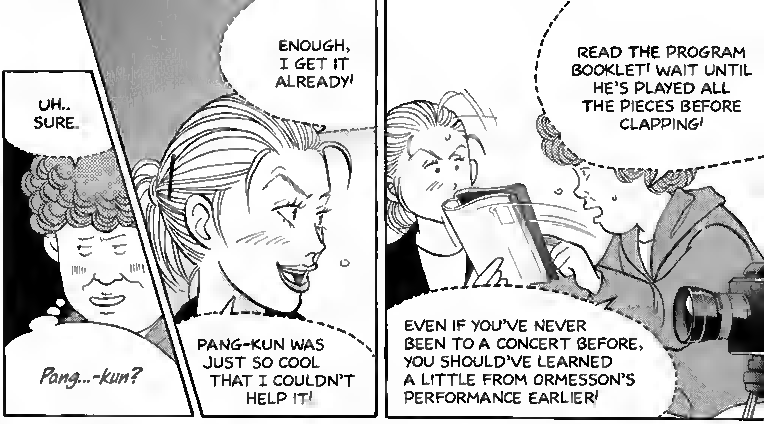
He'll definitely...
One day...
Even if he worked harder than others could believe, and practiced all day and night...
He's the type to not care about other's feelings... so it's impossible for him to create perfect music.
...reveal his flaw.

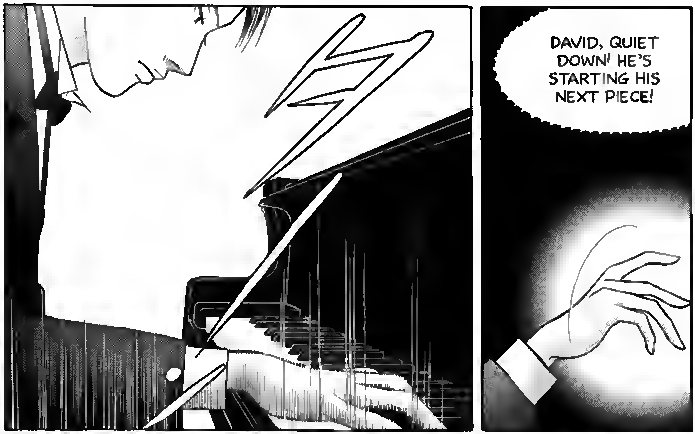




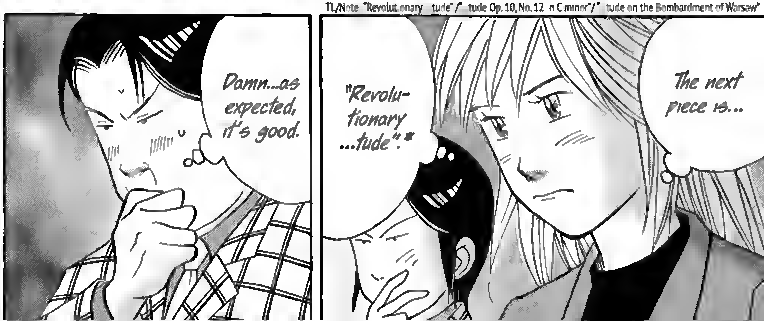


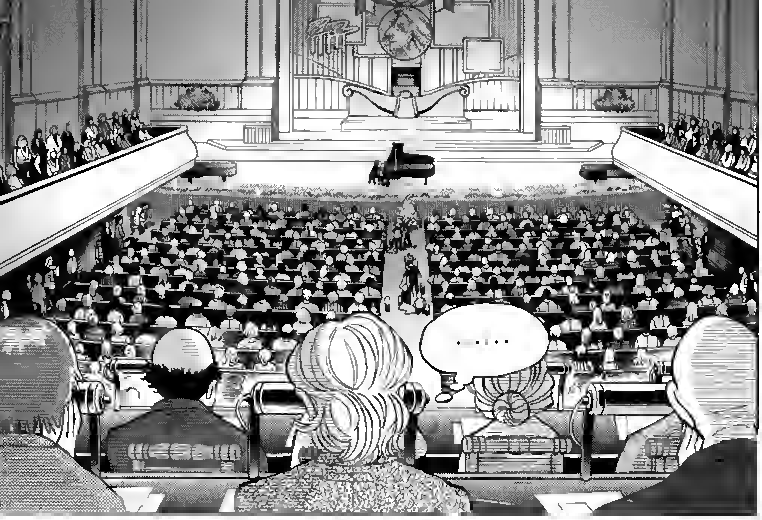
VICTORIA! YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO CLAP YET!
HE ONLY PLAYED THE FIRST PIECE!
WOW!


ENOUGH, I GET IT ALREADY!
UH.. SURE.
PANG-KUN WAS JUST SO COOL THAT I COULDN'T HELP IT!
Pang...-kun?
READ THE PROGRAM BOOKLET! WAIT UNTIL HE'S PLAYED ALL THE PIECES BEFORE CLAPPING!
EVEN IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TO A CONCERT BEFORE, YOU SHOULD'VE LEARNED A LITTLE FROM ORMESSON'S PERFORMANCE EARLIER!

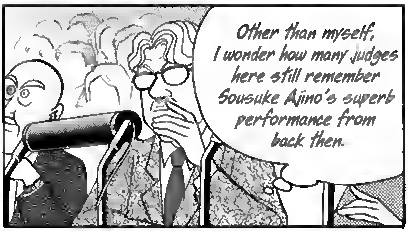


TL/Note: "Revolutionary ...tude"/"...tude Op.10, No.12 in C minor"/"...tude on the Bombardment of Warsaw"

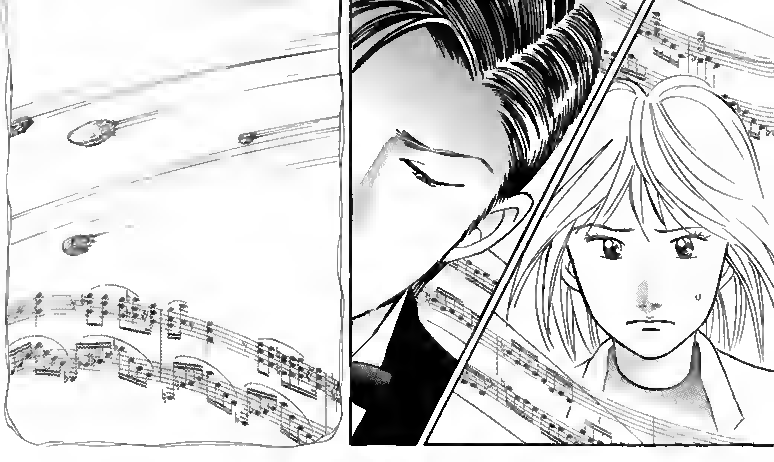


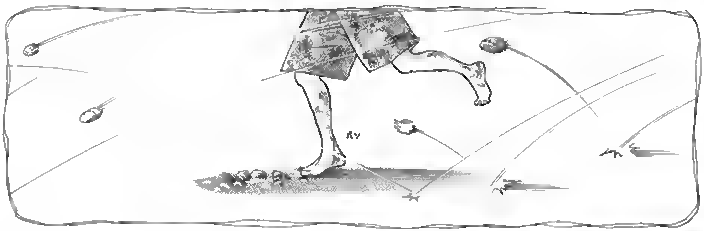

. . . . . .

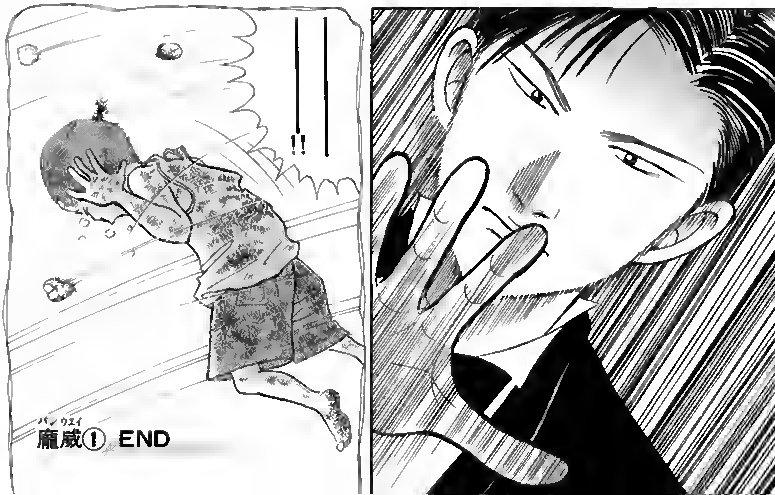
Ajino's performances had a style that no one could emulate


Other than myself, I wonder how many judges here still remember Sousuke Ajino's superb performance from back then.

That was why J. J. Serrault gave him such a high appraisal.







庸威(ヨン ウェイ)① END

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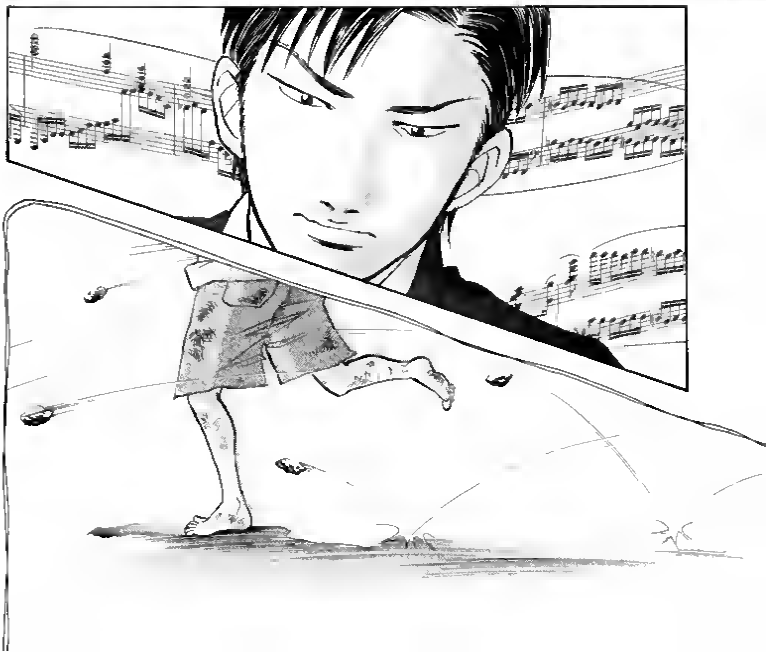
Wei Pang 2
Chapter 116

Wei Pang's next piece is the "Revolutionary Etude".

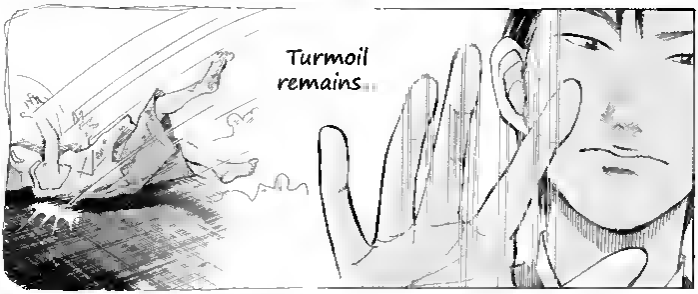


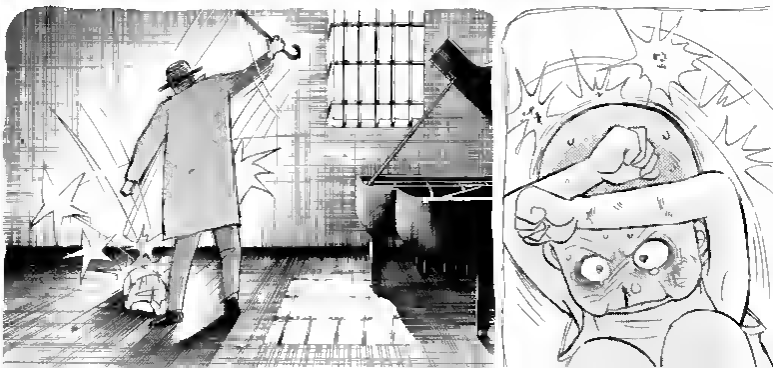
According to historical records...
Chopin composed this piece when he heard that Poland's army lost against Russian troops..

His expression of anger, suffering, grief...
It makes you wonder if he had actually suffered during that period of Poland's history.

Such moving solemnity...
It's as if he is narrating the cries of the Polish people.
Patriotic sentiments...

...since you're not grazing over the "thirds", but emphasizing them instead
...also known as "Thirds"...
Next up is Étude Op 25, No 6...


Turmoil remains...



He is indeed a cosmopolitan Chinese! The way he expressed every piece gave each of them it's own beauty.
and "Tarantella" (Italy)...
The next few dance songs that Wei Pang will perform are...
"Waltz" (Austria), "Bolero" (Spain)
....

PR Note: The kanji in the parentheses actually says "funauta" wh ch means "shanty." If you didn't know, a "shanty" is a work song for sailors.

—
Is this a whole new version of "Barcarole"?
This is what Venetian gondoliers sang while rowing.
Be quiet! You don't have give a commentary on every single piece.

Someone like Wei Pang could never play it well!!
The "Barcarole" is a very heartwarming song
Th-this song is a complete mistake

If you plan on using this song to lift the mood...
If...

SFX: Woosh!

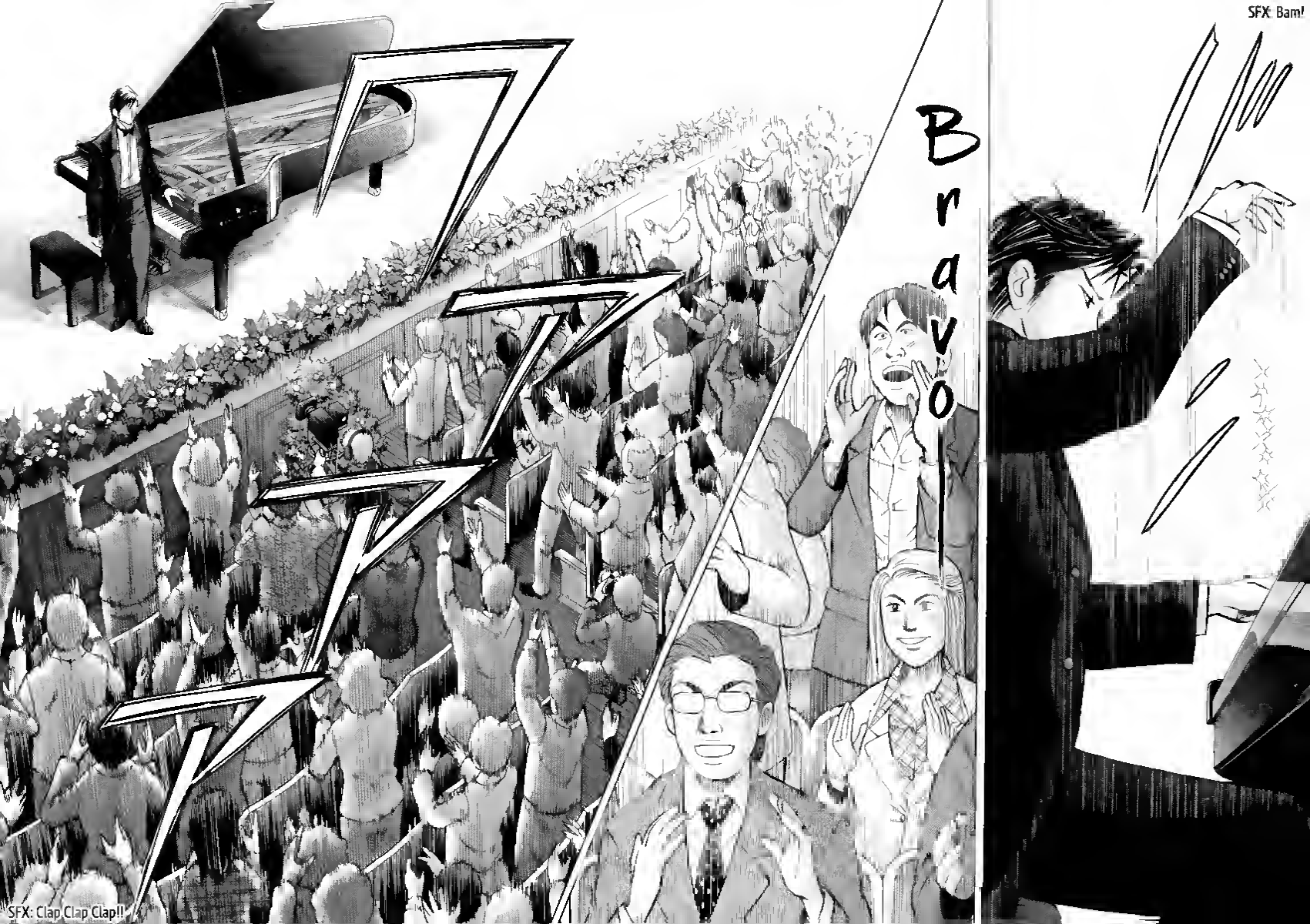
SFX Fwoosh!

From beginning to end it has been Ajino's notes...
Yet his playing sounds like...
Scherzo No. 3 in C# minor, Op. 39— a song with an intense tempo and climax.
The last song that Wei Pang chose for the first preliminary round was...
Finally...

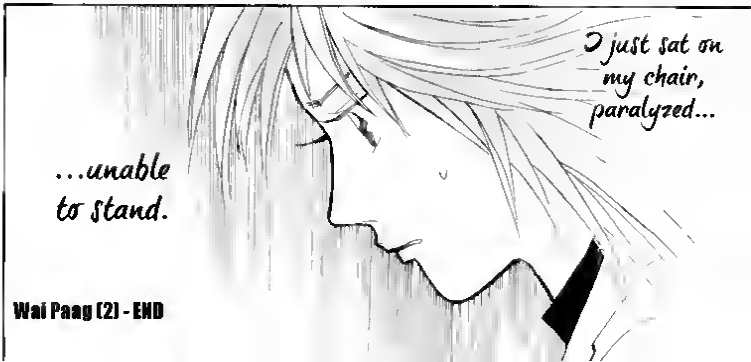
...The sufferings...

...of purgatory...

What on earth ..
This young man called Wei Pang...
What heavy sins does he bear?!


SFX: Bam!
Bravo
SFX: Clap Clap Clap!!

SFX Clap Clap Clap!!



Wai Paag (2) - END

Let's look for a nice restaurant to fill our stomachs.
Come on, Shuhei!
SFX Gets up
SFX Clap Clap Clap!
Ah...
Okay.
....
Ajino's musical notes...
Whether or not Ajino had once influenced him, Wei Pang has already embarked on his own path.
Shuhei... those weren't Ajino Sousuke's notes.

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by ISSHIKI Makoto
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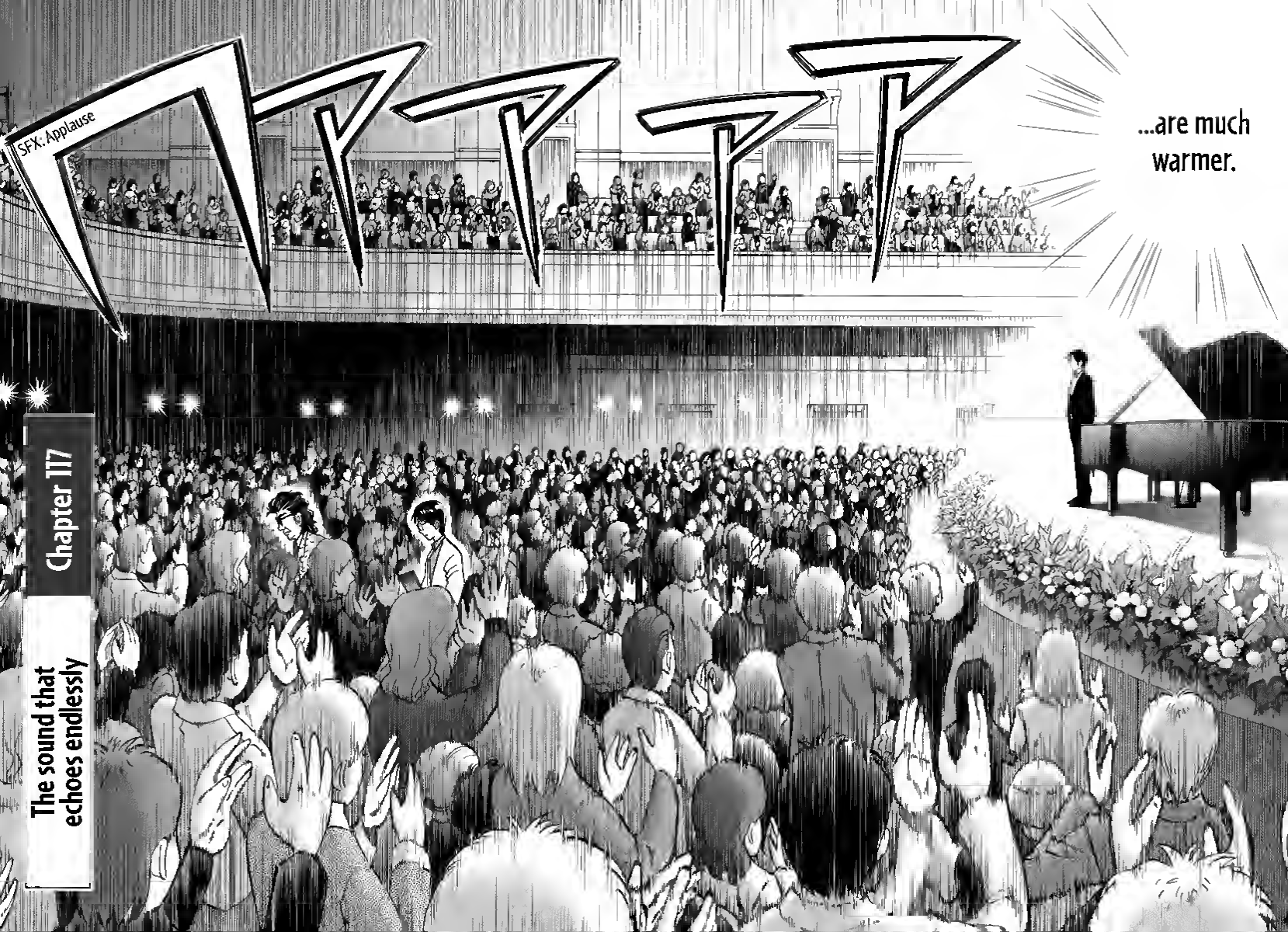
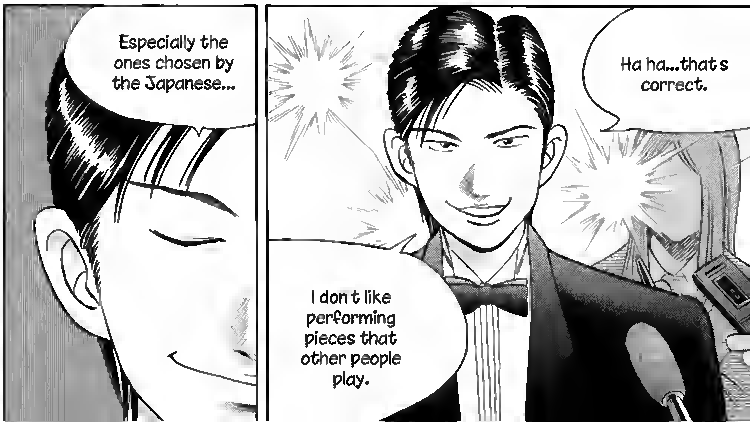

SFX: Applause
...are much warmer.
Chapter 117
The sound that echoes endlessly

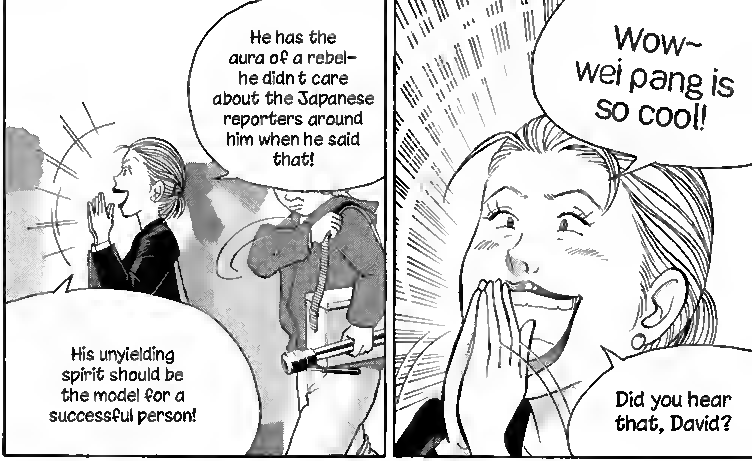
SFX: Click! Click!

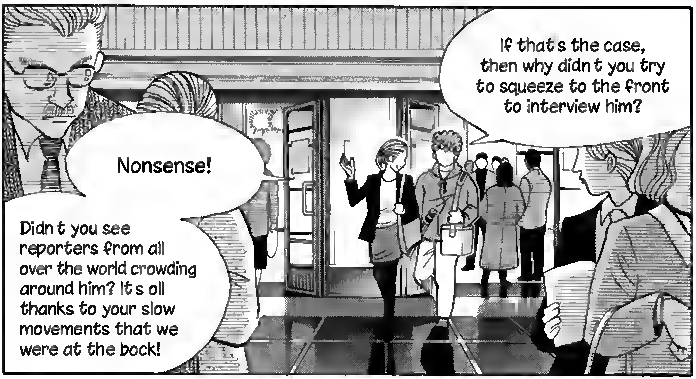
Mr. Pang! Why did you choose pieces like "Bolero" and "Tarantella"?
Did you purposefully avoid popular pieces like Étude Op. 25, No. 2 in F minor and Ballade No. 1 in D flat major?

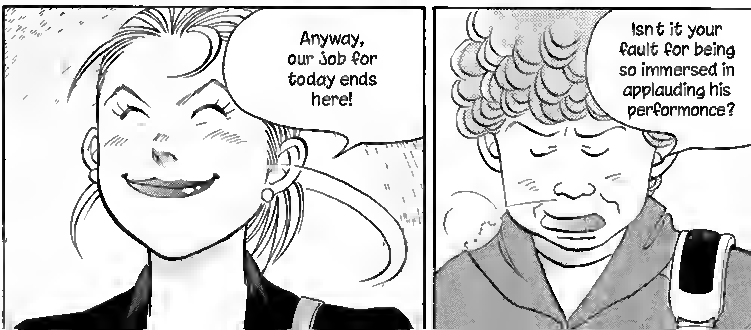


I am a dignified Chinese...
Most people would choose Étude No. 2 and Ballade No. 1.
JAPANESE REPORTERS
Even their method of playing them is very similar.

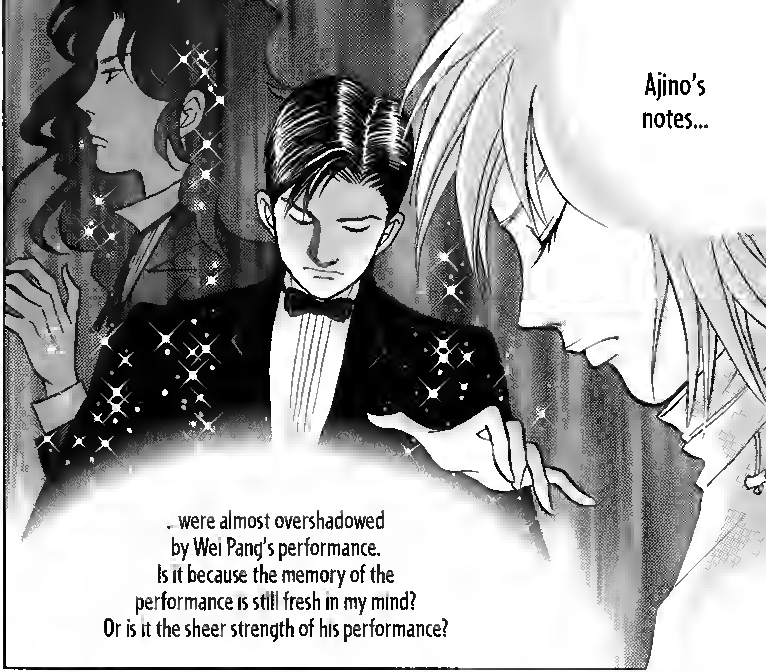
But I am also..
...a world-class pianist about to conquer Italy, Spain, Austria, Poland and many other countries.


He has the aura of a rebel- he didn't care about the Japanese reporters around him when he said that!
His unyielding spirit should be the model for a successful person!
Wow~ wei pang is so cool!
Did you hear that, David?


If that's the case, then why didn't you try to squeeze to the front to interview him?
Nonsense!
Didn't you see reporters from all over the world crowding around him? It's all thanks to your slow movements that we were at the back!

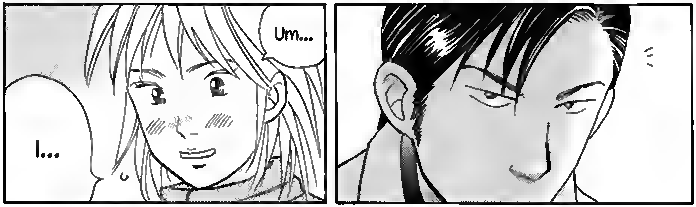

Anyway, our Job for today ends here!
Isn't it your fault for being so immersed in applauding his performance?

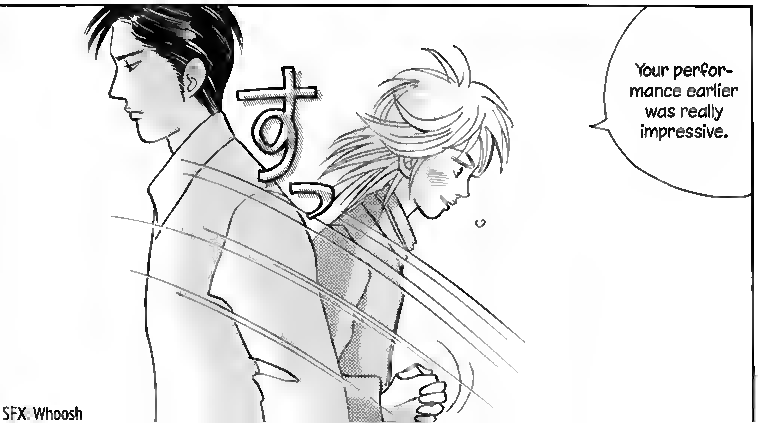
Well then, I'm off to grab some good food!
W-Wait! Victoria!
Wei Pang was the spotlight of today's program! You said it yourself, David.
Huh?!
What about the afternoon program? There are still five competitors who haven't performed yet!
It keeps resonating in my mind. .
Wei Pang's performance...


Ajino's notes...
. were almost overshadowed by Wei Pang's performance. Is it because the memory of the performance is still fresh in my mind? Or is it the sheer strength of his performance?

I won't be long.
I'm just going back to the lounge to get something.

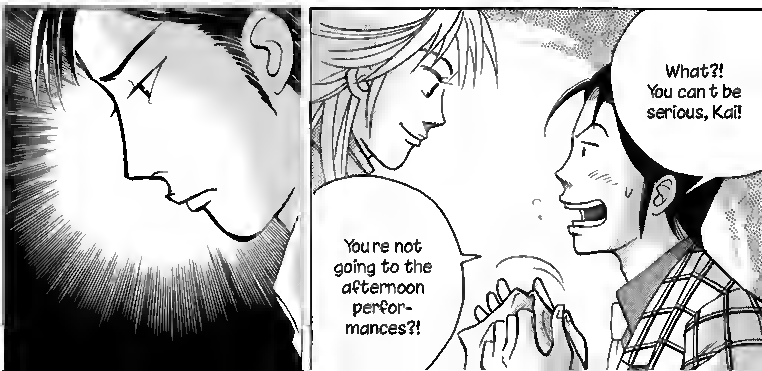
Wei Pang!
Ah...


Um...
I...

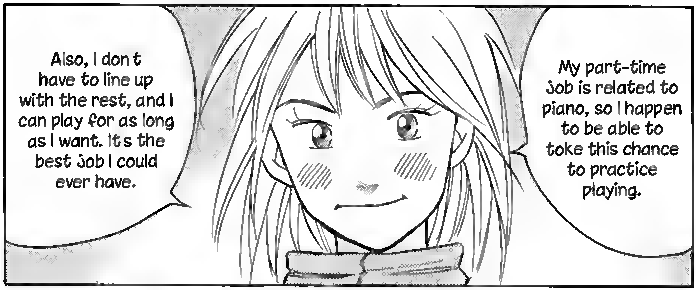

Your performance earlier was really impressive.
SFX: Whoosh

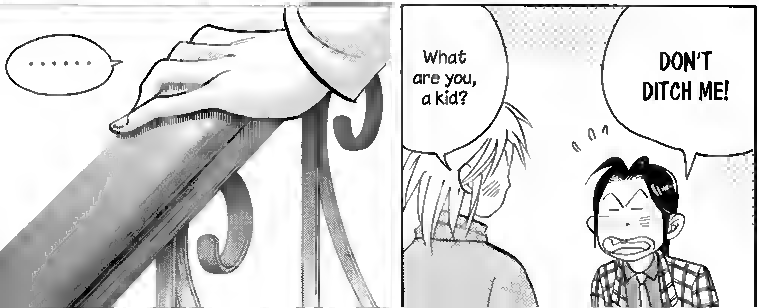
There was a long line for the bathroom, but it was still better than the one in the concert hall.
Sorry for making you wait!
Ah...

I thought I saw his face somewhere before, but he was just some guy who went to the performance with Kousei
So he's that fool's companion..

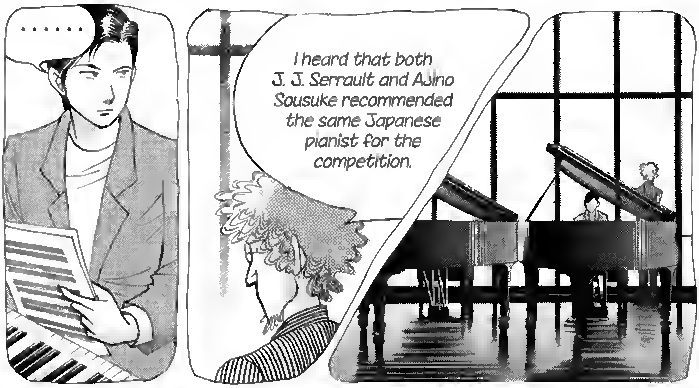

You're not going to the afternoon performances?!
What?! You can't be serious, Kai!

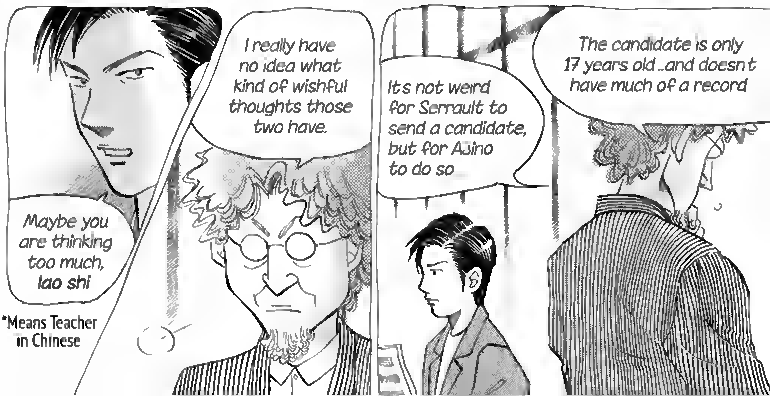
Kai?!
You're really leaving for work?!
The competition has already started, and you're going to perform in a few days time!
Stop joking around!


My part-time job is related to piano, so I happen to be able to take this chance to practice playing.
Also, I don't have to line up with the rest, and I can play for as long as I want. It's the best job I could ever have.


DON'T DITCH ME!
What are you, a kid?
.....

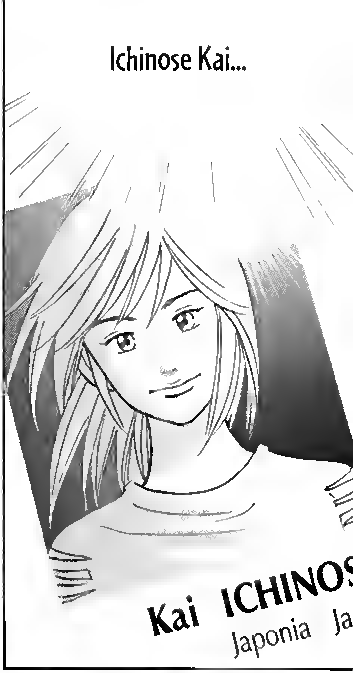
ICHINOSE...
KAI...


.....
I heard that both J. J. Serrault and Ajino Sousuke recommended the same Japanese pianist for the competition.

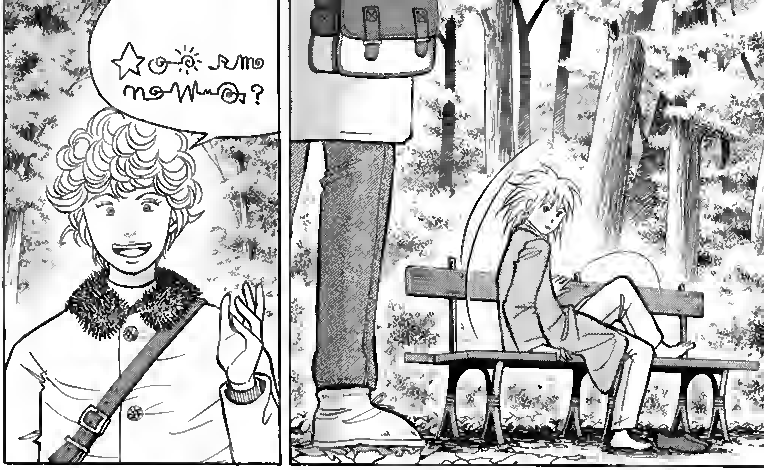

I really have no idea what kind of wishful thoughts those two have.
Maybe you are thinking too much, lao shi
*Means Teacher in Chinese
It's not weird for Serrault to send a candidate, but for Ajino to do so
The candidate is only 17 years old ..and doesn't have much of a record

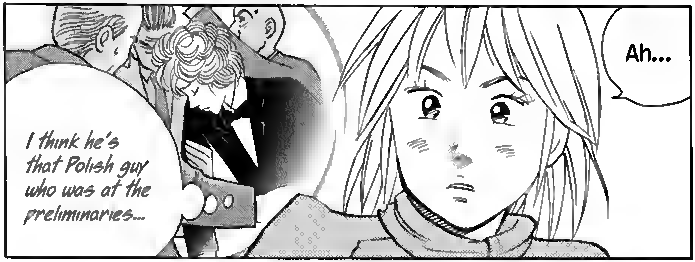
However, we don't know for sure if the judges at the official competition know each candidate's referrer
Furthermore, a candidate's performance has nothing to do with the referrer
....
That candidate will definitely become the focus of the preliminary rounds
37
Kai ICHINOSE
Japonia Japan
When I saw his picture in the program booklet, I thought he was a girl

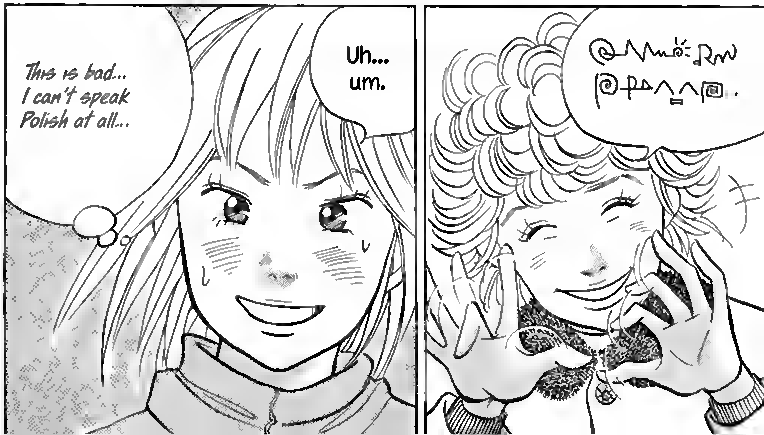
Ajino's only student.

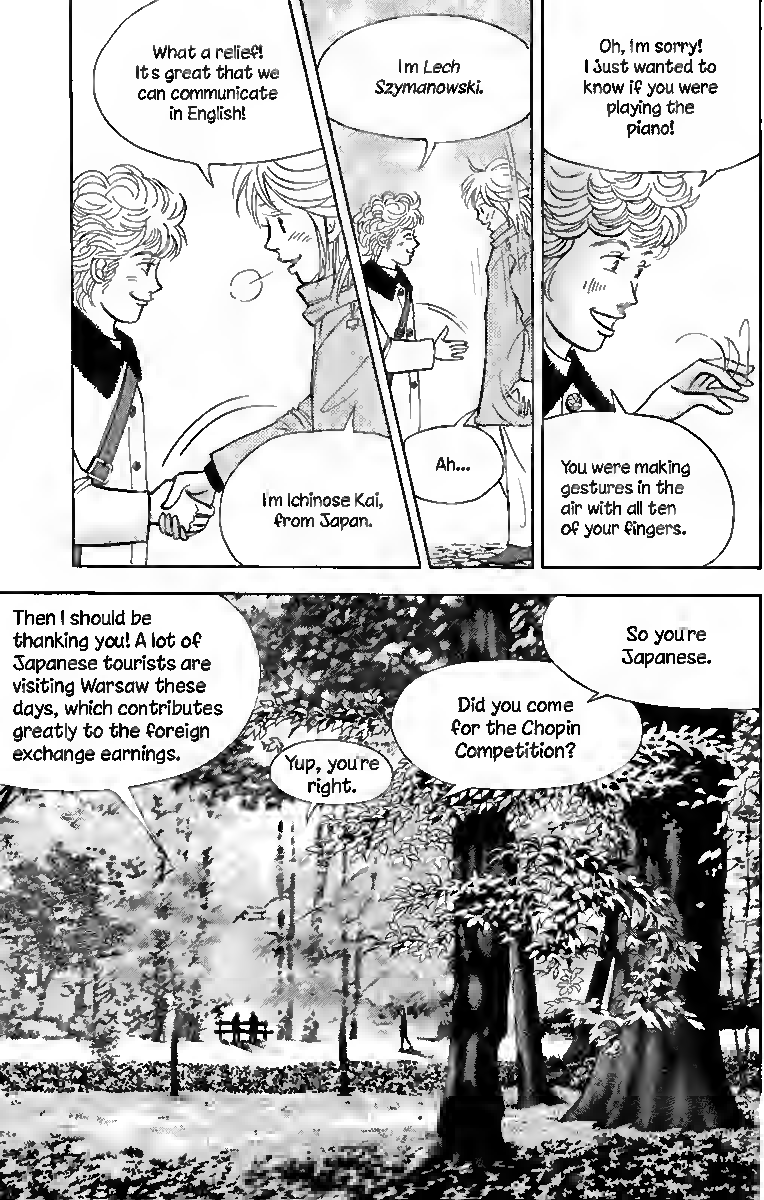

Ichinose Kai...
Kai ICHINOS
Japonia Ja

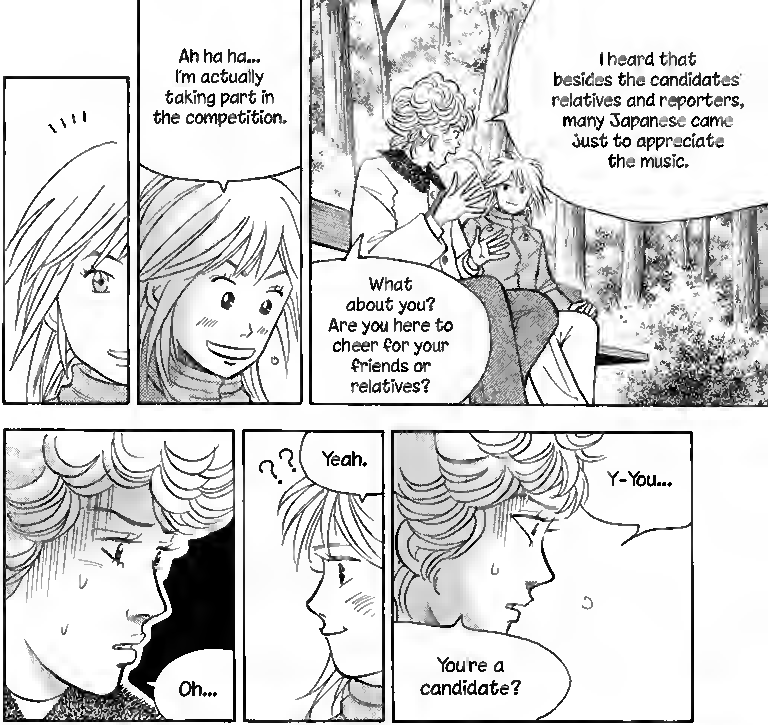
BOOM BOOM
BOOM BAM
BAM BAM♪
Wei Pang's more like...
Lu Lu Lu La La La♪
Ajino's notes are like...
The style is definitely unique to Wei Pang.
Although it's somewhat similar to Ajino's notes..
AH HA HA...
Wei Pang's notes, on the other hand, only give you a chilling feeling.
Ajino's playing can bring you to tears.



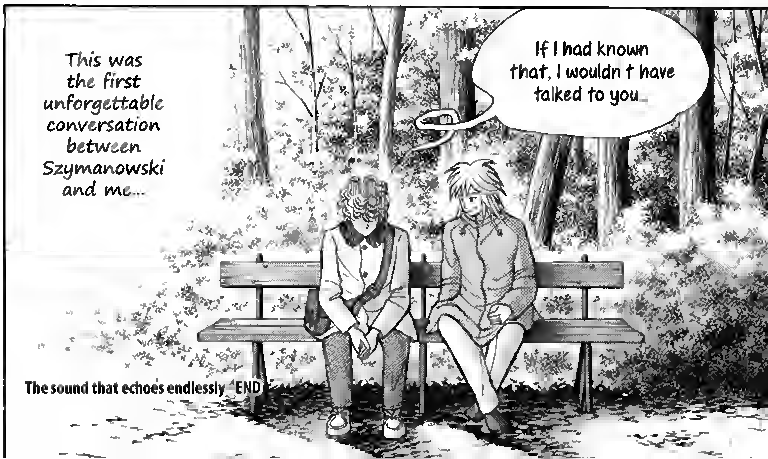

Ah...
I think he's that Polish guy who was at the preliminaries...


Uh... um.
This is bad... I can't speak Polish at all...


What a relief! It's great that we can communicate in English!
I'm Lech Szymanowski.
Oh, I'm sorry! I just wanted to know if you were playing the piano!
I'm Ichinose Kai, from Japan.
Ah...
You were making gestures in the air with all ten of your fingers.
Then I should be thanking you! A lot of Japanese tourists are visiting Warsaw these days, which contributes greatly to the foreign exchange earnings.
Yup, you're right.
Did you come for the Chopin Competition?
So you're Japanese.


I heard that besides the candidates' relatives and reporters, many Japanese came just to appreciate the music.
What about you? Are you here to cheer for your friends or relatives?
Ah ha ha... I'm actually taking part in the competition.
!!!!

Y-You...
You're a candidate?
Yeah.
??
Oh...


This was the first unforgettable conversation between Szymanowski and me...
If I had known that, I wouldn't have talked to you...
The sound that echoes endlessly "END"

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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Piano no Mori ch 117

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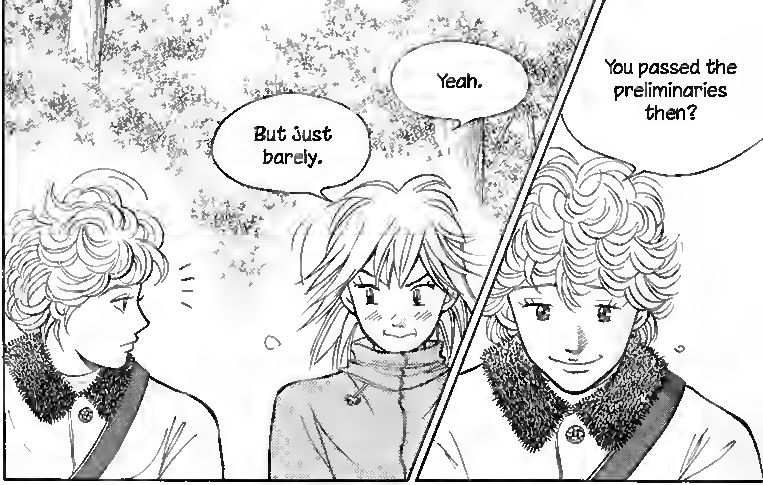
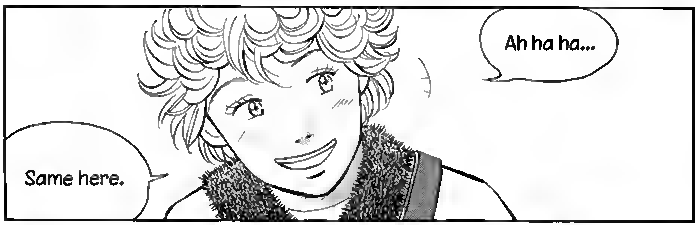
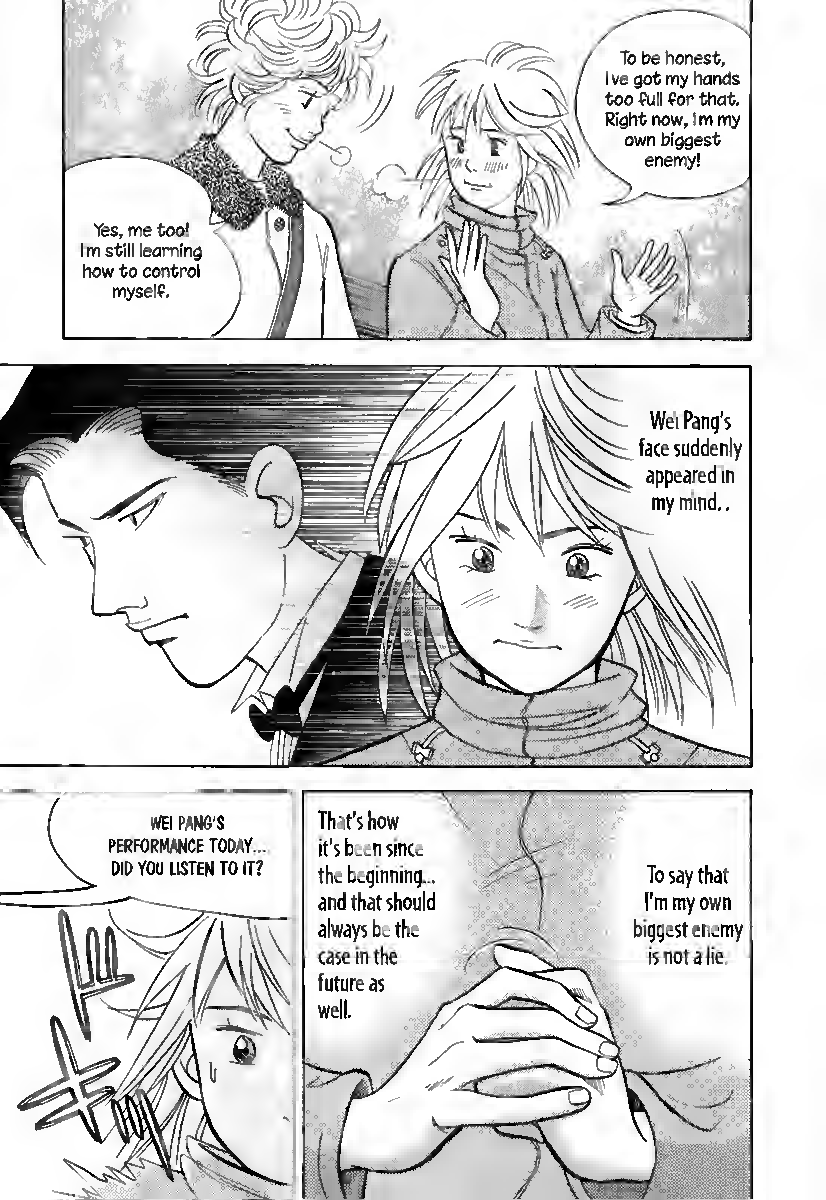
Chapter 118

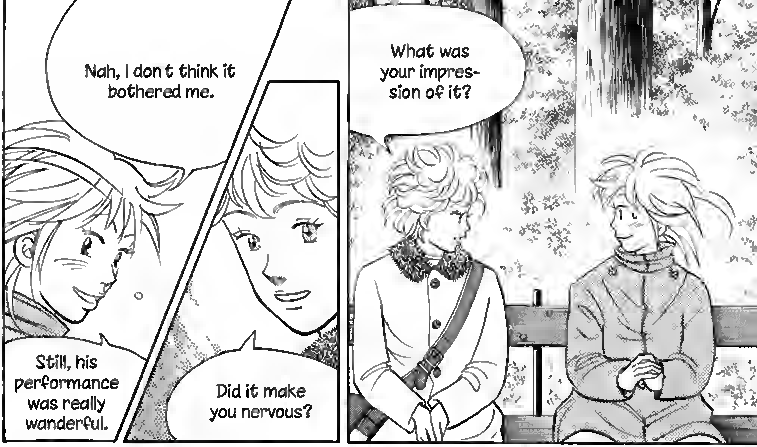
Dryad

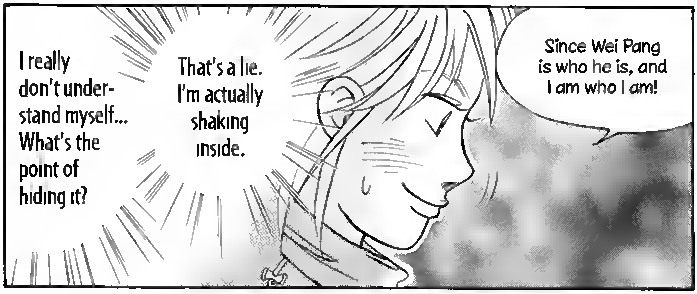

You passed the preliminaries then?
Yeah.
But just barely.

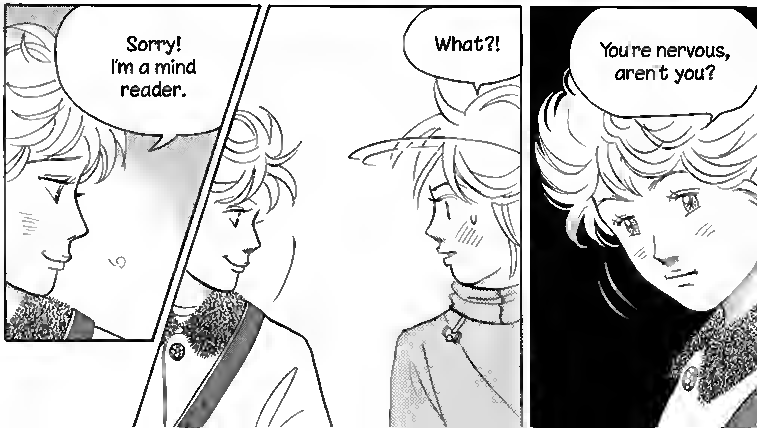

Ah ha ha...
Same here.

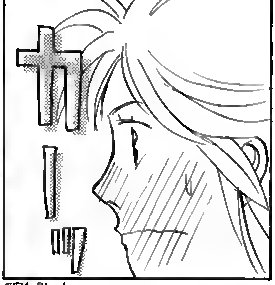
Thank goodness.
I hope that we won't become enemies.
Ah ha ha... Of course that won't happen!


To be honest, I've got my hands too full for that. Right now, I'm my own biggest enemy!
Yes, me too! I'm still learning how to control myself.
Wei Pang's face suddenly appeared in my mind. .
WEI PANG'S PERFORMANCE TODAY... DID YOU LISTEN TO IT?
That's how it's been since the beginning... and that should always be the case in the future as well.
To say that I'm my own biggest enemy is not a lie.

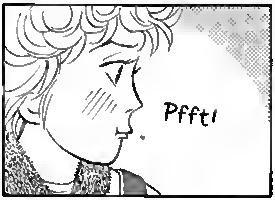

Nah, I don't think it bothered me.
What was your impression of it?
Still, his performance was really wanderful.
Did it make you nervous?

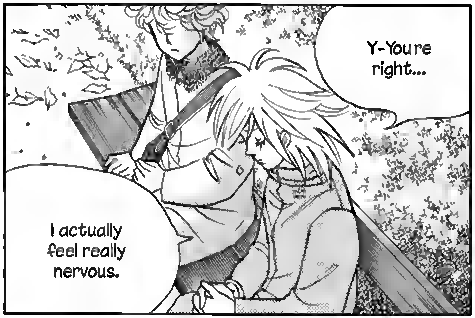

I really don't understand myself... What's the point of hiding it?
That's a lie. I'm actually shaking inside.
Since Wei Pang is who he is, and I am who I am!

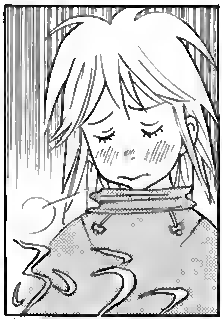

Sorry! I'm a mind reader.
What?!
You're nervous, aren't you?



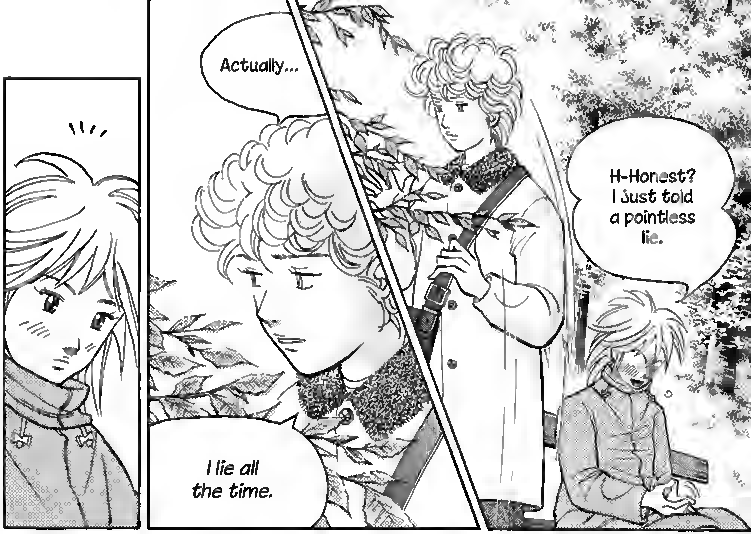
SFX: Blush

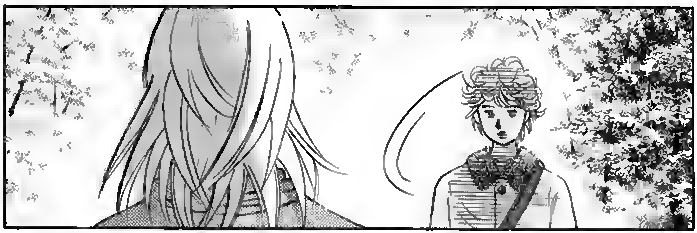


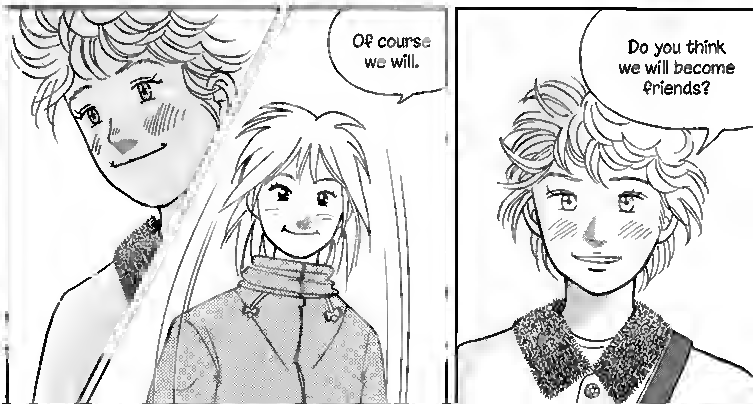




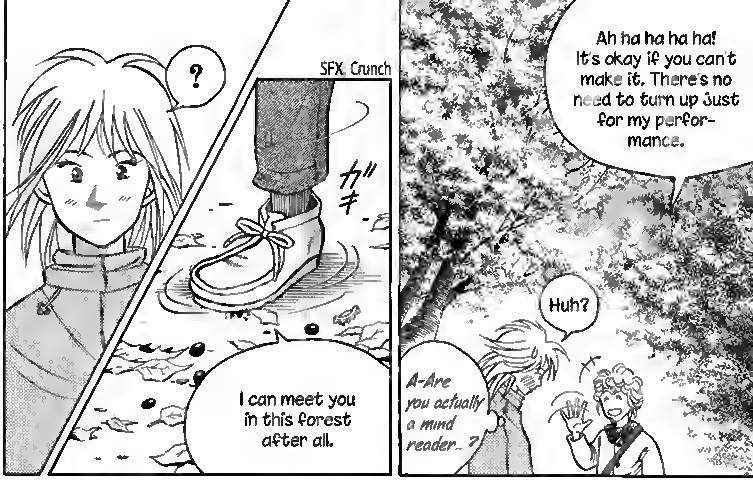
SFX: Sigh

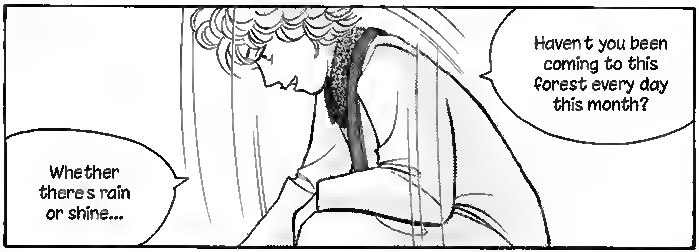

Actually...
I lie all the time.
H-Honest? I just told a pointless lie.

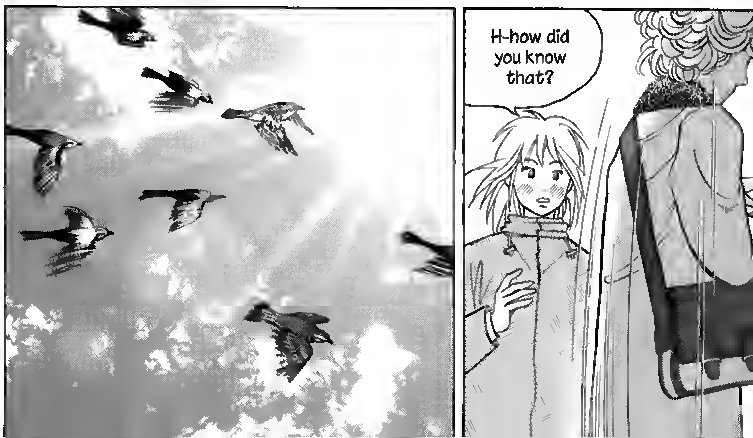



Of course we will.
Do you think we will become friends?

Ah ha ha, you don't need to since I'm performing on the last day.
By then, everyone will probably be sick of listening to performances.
On the last day?
Really?
Kai, when are you performing? Can I come watch?
That's great! No matter how bad your body condition is...
...you'll still have to bite the bullet and go on stage. You've got your back against the wall since you can't change the date!
So, you have no choice but to perform!
That... That's true...
Tomorrow?
Ah...I didn't plan on coming tomorrow
I'll be performing tomorrow.


?
SFX: Crunch
カ〃キ-
I can meet you in this forest after all.
Ah ha ha ha ha! It's okay if you can't make it. There's no need to turn up just for my performance.
Huh?
A-Are you actually a mind reader...?


Haven't you been coming to this forest every day this month?
Whether there's rain or shine...


H-how did you know that?

Because...
I'm the "owner" of this forest.
I notice what everyone does when they come to this forest.
Actually, this forest is called "Łazienki Park".

I do too.
Did you know that I call this garden "Chopin's Forest"?
Oh? Is that so?
Kai, where are you going next?
Are you staying in this forest?
No, I should be going to work.

That's not true... I just made a random guess based on the assumption that a candidate's part-time job would have something to do with the piano.
Lech... you know everything, don't you?
It's a "job" that let's you practice the piano, right?
Ah! Although I can't really call it work...
Yeah, see you!
Well, see you!
Lech said that he's... the "owner" of the forest...
Lech?!

Where did he go?!
He's gone!

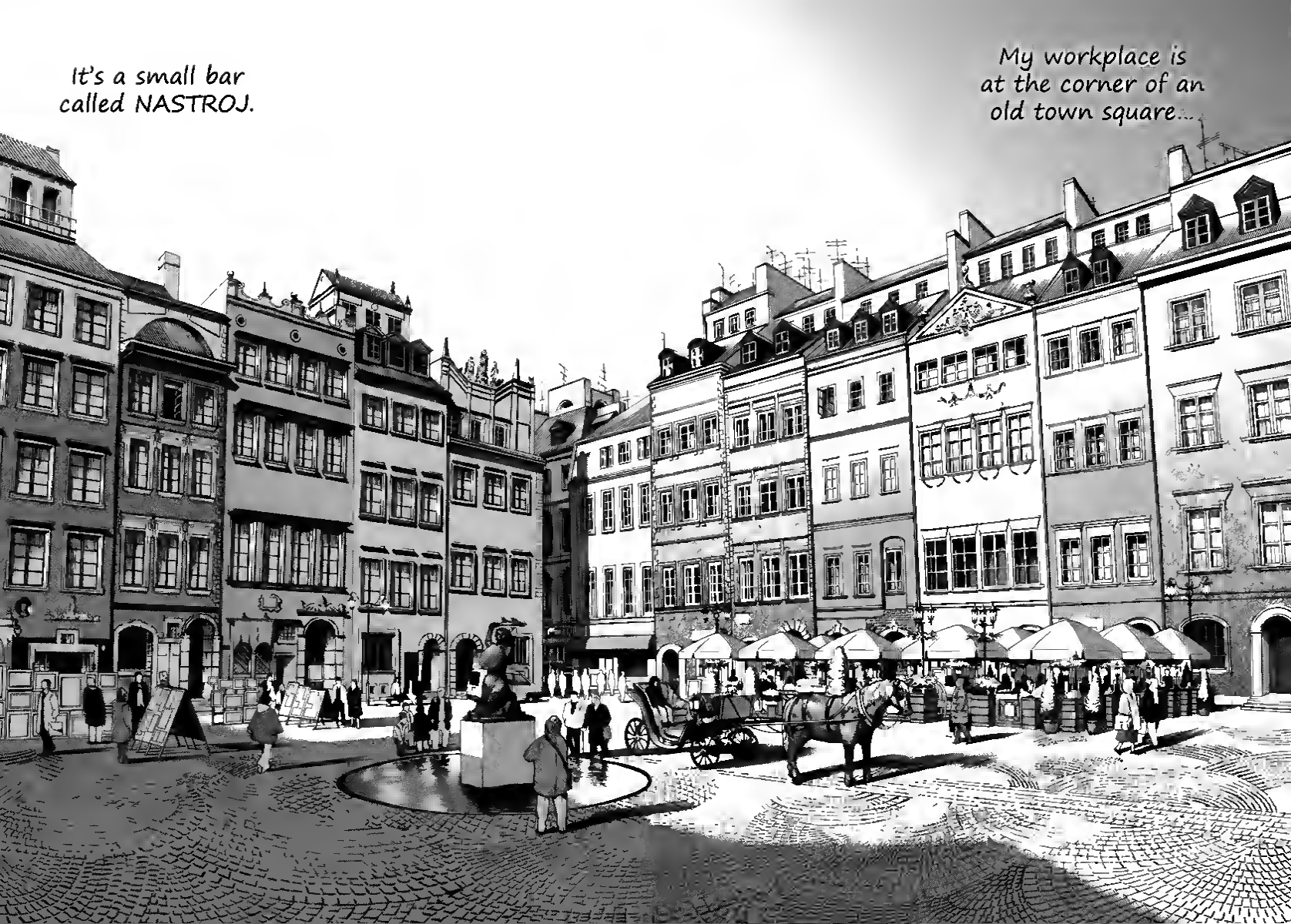
LECH!

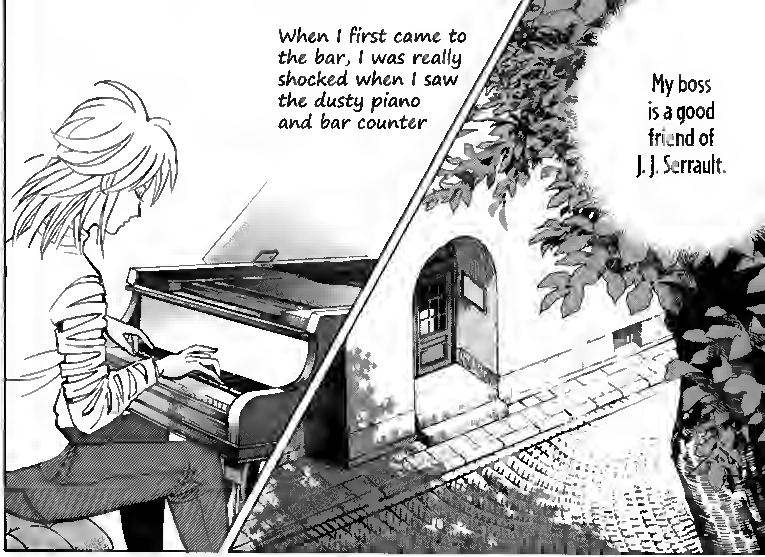
SFX: Shoom

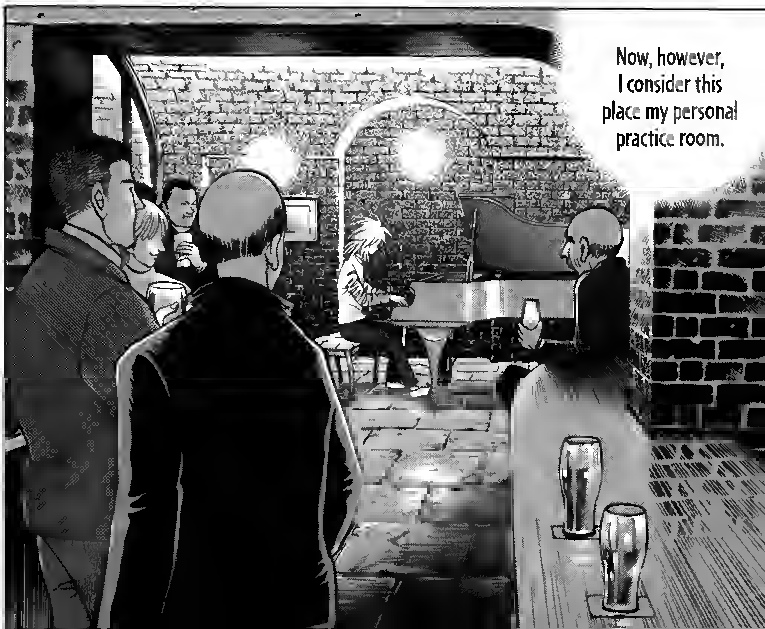
Phew. I thought he'd disappeared
Wipe
Wipe

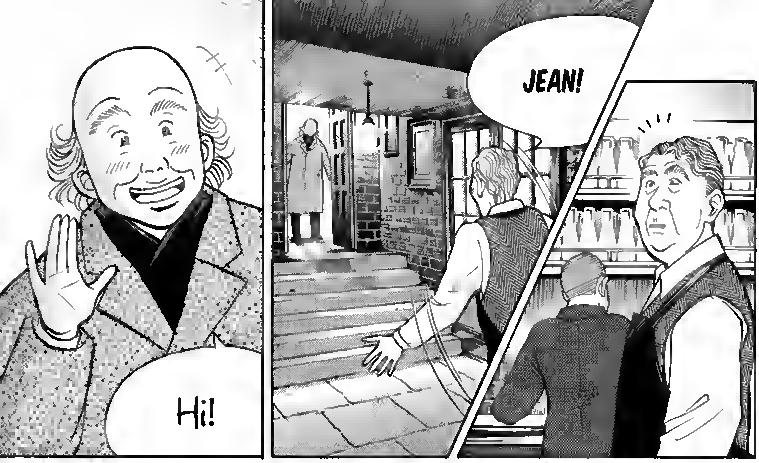
Is something wrong?

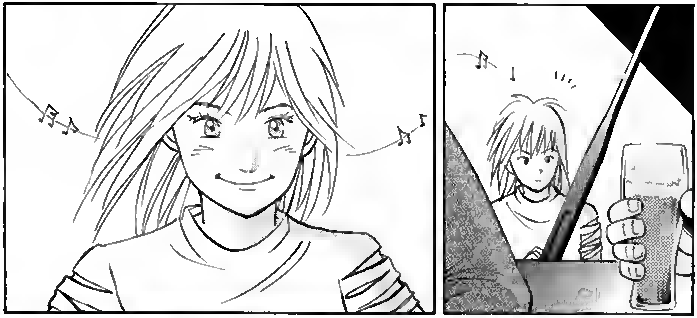
Lech Szymanowski...
Do your best tomorrow!
He doesn't feel like a normal person at all.
Rather than the forest's "owner", I think he's more like a forest spirit or dryad...
I should be going to work.
Oh!
I wonder what his performance style is...


It's a small bar called NASTROJ.
My workplace is at the corner of an old town square...

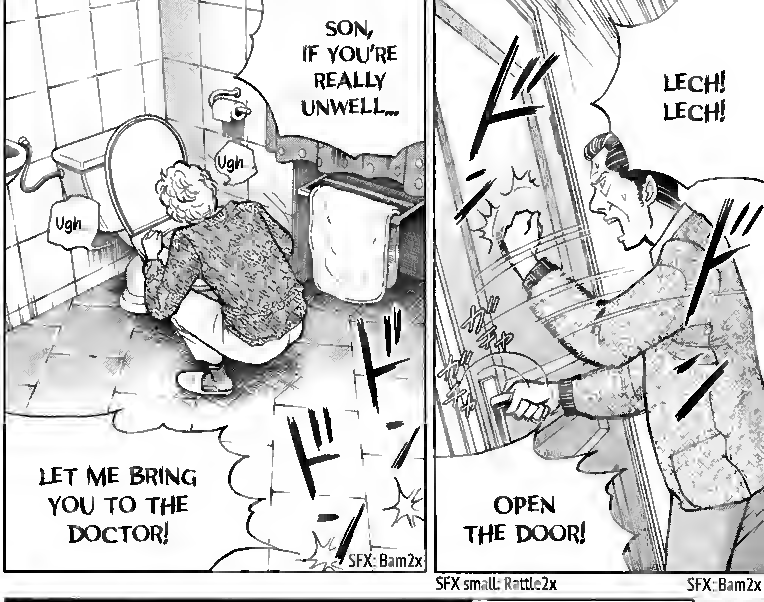

When I first came to the bar, I was really shocked when I saw the dusty piano and bar counter
My boss is a good friend of J. J. Serrault.

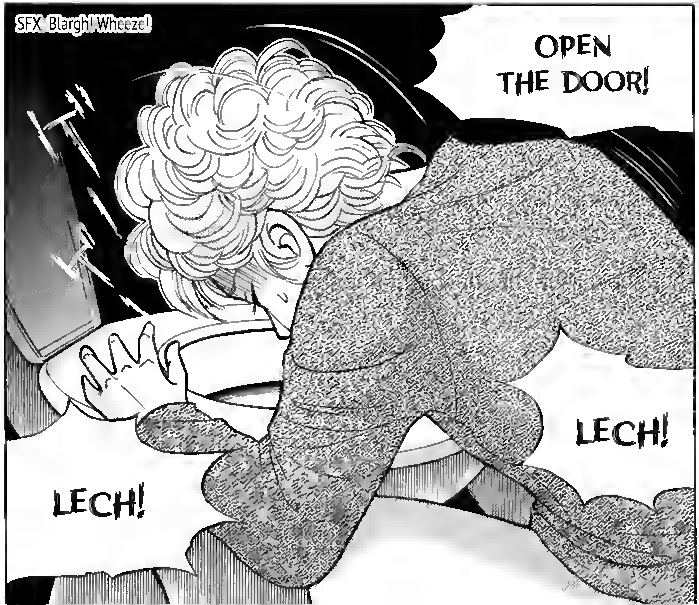

Now, however, I consider this place my personal practice room.

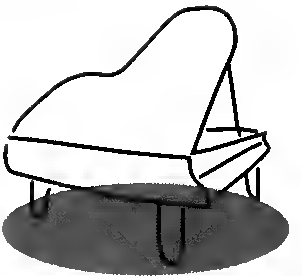




SFX: Plunk Plunk Plunk Plunk Plunk


SON, IF YOU'RE REALLY UNWELL...
Ugh
Ugh
LET ME BRING YOU TO THE DOCTOR!
SFX: Bam2x
LECH! LECH!
OPEN THE DOOR!
SFX small: Rattle2x
SFX: Bam2x


SFX: Blargh! Wheeze!
OPEN THE DOOR!
LECH!
LECH!



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N.D.C. 726　211p　19cm

モーニングKC—1554

ピアノの森 13

二〇〇六年十二月二十二日　第一刷発行
（定価はカバーに表示してあります）

著者　一色まこと
発行者　五十嵐隆夫
発行所　株式会社講談社
東京都文京区音羽二—一二—二一
郵便番号　一一二—八〇〇一
電話　編集部　東京（〇三）三九四五—九一五五
販売部　東京（〇三）五三九五—三六〇八

印刷所　共同印刷株式会社
製本所　株式会社フォーネット社

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